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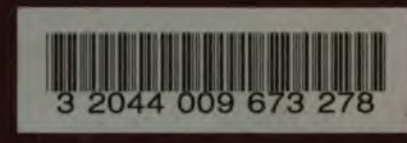
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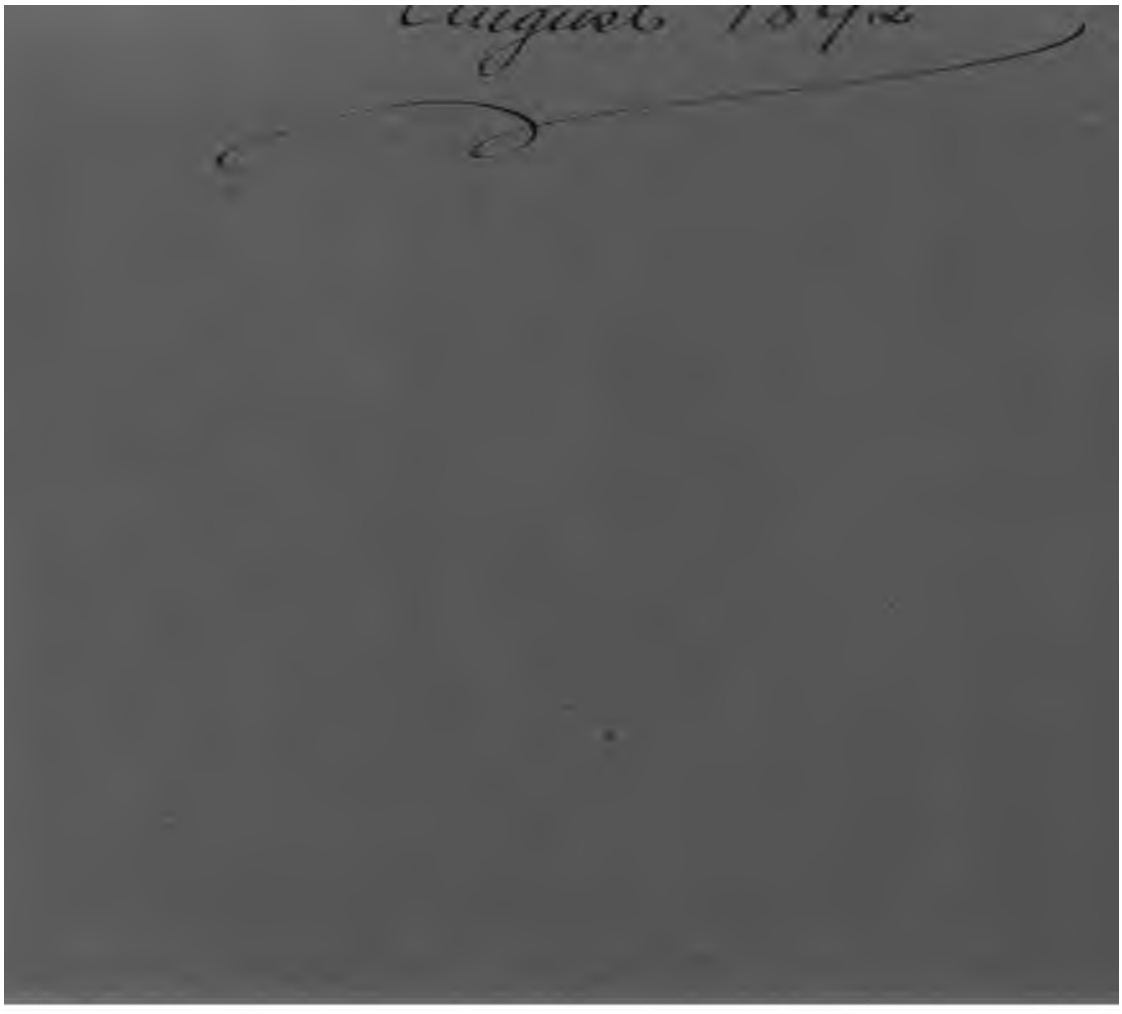

# THE WAR
IN
# EGYPT AND THE SOUDAN.

# THE WAR
IN
# EGYPT AND THE SOUDAN.

THE MAHDI.

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# THE WAR

IN

# EGYPT AND THE SOUDAN

AN EPISODE IN

THE HISTORY OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE;

BEING

A DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT OF THE SCENES AND EVENTS OF THAT GREAT DRAMA,
AND SKETCHES OF THE PRINCIPAL ACTORS IN IT.

BY

THOMAS ARCHER, F.R.H.S.,

AUTHOR OF "FIFTY YEARS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROGRESS,"
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# THE WAR

IN

# EGYPT AND THE SOUDAN.

## CHAPTER VI.

The Question of the Soudan and England. Opinion of the Ex-khedive. State of Affairs at Khartûm. Embarrassment of the British Government. Gordon Interviewed. The Vox Populi. Gordon agrees to return to the Soudan. Starts for Egypt. His Mission, and its Object. Zebehr Pasha again. The Journey and Arrival at Khartûm. Active Measures. Halfiyeh. Position of Berber. Discussions in England. Egyptian Financial Changes.

IT is not to be wondered at that the Egyptian ministry was greatly perturbed. In the beginning of the year 1884 they had had to face the probability of an attempted invasion of Egypt itself by the savage and rebellious forces of the Mahdi. The condition of the Soudan provinces was almost hopeless so far as the maintenance of the authority of the government was concerned. It had become too evident that Egyptian troops could not stand before the wild and reckless onslaughts of the Baggara, the Hadendowa, and other fierce tribes of the desert, who had entered on the war stimulated by violent fanaticism, and seemed to be determined to pursue it to the death. The victories of the false prophet and his lieutenants had so raised his reputation that a host of new adherents followed his standard, and made up for the vast numbers who had been slain when they were confronted by sections of tribes as resolute and warlike as themselves, and who, though inferior in numbers, had been led by men with some knowledge of warfare and military tactics, and were provided with firearms in addition to the ordinary weapons, so that they were able to sustain the feeble courage or to threaten the cowardice of the untrained Egyptian recruits.

Nearly the whole of the Soudan was in a state of rebellion before the defeat of the followers of Osman Digma at El Teb and Tamai. The English government had maintained the declaration of the principle first laid down, and refused to recognize that they should be called upon practically to concern themselves either with the defence of the Soudan or its restitution to Egyptian rule. This, they contended, was the business of the Egyptian government if it was to be effected at all, and if it could not be accomplished with the means at the command of the viceroy and his ministry it had better be abandoned, when a small force of British troops would remain to assist in preventing any invasion of Egypt itself by the rebels.

The advice that had been seriously offered to the Egyptian government was that they should relieve the invested garrisons and relinquish the western provinces of the Soudan as quickly as possible. This advice was, as we have seen, in accordance with the expressed opinion of Lord Dufferin, and agreed in some measure with that held by General Gordon at the time that he had retired from the governor-generalship of the Soudan provinces.

It must be remembered, however, that Lord Dufferin had been very doubtful whether the Eastern Soudan could be safely relinquished, and the khedive himself was entirely opposed to the abandonment of a territory which had already cost so much, and might under better conditions be made to yield a large amount of national wealth. Of course it is easy for anybody to be wise after the event; but at the time just before the interposition of General Graham's force and our protection of Suakim, a good many people agreed with the ex-khedive Ismail when he was consulted by a visitor on the subject of the disaster in the Soudan.

This shrewd personage attributed the rebellion in that region to the weakness of the government at Cairo. His highness said that in every part of the Soudan much power is in the hands of a number of religious chiefs, who can easily be managed, but are dangerous if neglected. He contrived to keep them quiet in his time by a small monthly stipend, which the Control, unwisely, as he thought, discontinued. He was of opinion that recent misfortunes

might have been avoided if the railway from Suakim on the Red Sea, to Berber on the Nile, had been completed to the Soudan; and it was false economy that led to the abandonment of the scheme by the Control. The manner of sending the troops to the war had also, his highness contended, materially helped to the disaster. "Arabi's disbanded soldiers were sent up to reinforce Hicks Pasha like so many malefactors, deprived of their arms, dishonoured, and often led by officers who were forced to accept the task as a punishment, or even a form of exile. How could they fight with the material he had? I am not surprised at the calamity which has overtaken Egypt." To the question, "But does your highness think the Soudan should be at once abandoned?" "Certainly not," answered Ismail; "for the moment I think every exertion must be put forth to secure the part of the country still in the possession of Egypt, and the question of reconquest should be postponed till the enterprise can be undertaken in a regular and organized manner, and not piecemeal as a solitary and adventurous enterprise. Unless a stand is made it is impossible to foresee the possible consequences for Egypt. I think, in view of the present crisis of affairs, one of the princes—*e.g.* my son Prince Hassan—should be named Governor-general of the Soudan, with plenary and uncontrolled powers. He could do a great deal, although the weakness of the executive at Cairo might certainly impair his chances of success." "Might I ask," continued the interlocutor, "if your highness thinks English troops could be sent to the Soudan at the present juncture?" "No," answered Ismail; "such a step might involve still greater evils. Egyptian troops, if well officered, are best suited for the work of pacification." Ismail feared that a spirit of disaffection was rife among the Bedouin tribes of Egypt. "What, then, about the next move of the Mahdi? Will he descend upon Lower Egypt, or will he remain where he is?" "The Mahdi," said Ismail, "will probably advance from Obeid upon Dongola, and from Dongola to Berber, where he will entirely sever communications between the Soudan and Egypt." "But, Khartûm? Will that be taken *en route?*" "Not at all. It is quite possible

to reach Dongola without passing through Khartûm. He is at Obeid. He will probably advance northward, leaving Khartûm on his right, and seize Dongola. From Dongola it is quite easy to strike Berber, and at Berber he will be able to sever all communications between the base at Suakim on the Red Sea and Khartûm. It is impossible for Egypt to abandon her hold on her possessions in the south. It may be difficult to reconquer them. It is impossible to abandon them. The road must be kept open from Suakim to Berber, from Berber to Khartûm, and from Khartûm to Sennâr. And that is what leads me to attach great importance to the defeat of Captain Moncrieff at Tokar. That reverse at the hands of Bedouins shows that even close to the littoral of the Red Sea communications are not safe. The rising of these Bedouins should be suppressed at once."

It was rather an artful touch to suggest making either of the princes sole ruler of the provinces, especially as one of them had already been suspected of having on his own account, or as an agent of Ismail, increased the dissatisfaction that resulted in the rebellion of Arabi; but still there is much in the opinion which the ex-khedive expressed that showed which way the intention of the Egyptian ministry would be likely to turn, on their considering the subject of abandoning the Soudan.

The determination of the British government to restrict their operations to Egypt proper and the advice that they had given with regard to the abandonment of the Soudan was repeatedly considered in the Egyptian councils during the early part of January, 1884, and it was resolved to offer a partial compliance with the representations which had been so seriously urged. It was proposed to resign Darfûr, Kordofan, and the other provinces, which were already in the hands of the rebellious natives and the followers of the Mahdi, and to offer the Eastern Soudan to the sultan, but the Egyptian government strongly objected to retire from Khartûm. This decision may have been influenced by the opinion that the insurrection would eventually die out either because of dissensions among the tribes or from their probable disaffection when the Mahdi attempted to subject them to the

only kind of authority which would keep them under control. In such an event the possession of Khartûm might mean the opportunity of regaining the lost provinces.

But the avowed policy of the British government had been to limit intervention to the lending of a military force to the khedive for the purpose of suppressing a rebellion within his own proper territory, and to leaving a much-reduced but sufficient body of troops for the protection of foreigners and the support of the government during the reconstruction and reform of the internal administration. It did not include military aid in retaining or reconquering the extensive provinces which Egypt had never been able to govern with unquestioned authority, nor could it be interpreted to mean the detention of a British army to protect Egypt while the government of the khedive concentrated its resources for the recovery of the Soudan.

The proposals of the Egyptian ministry were answered by a decided message requiring that all the Egyptian forces should be recalled to the territory within a line drawn at Wady Halfa (the second cataract of the Nile, 350 miles north of Khartûm), and that they should be concentrated for the defence of the country, in which, as an implied concession, they would be assisted by British troops should the invasion of this line be threatened. It was also represented that there would be no objection offered to the cession of the Eastern Soudan to Turkey so long as it was taken over at the expense of the Turkish government and that no part of the cost of taking possession should fall upon Egypt. This message had the intended effect of causing a crisis in the Egyptian cabinet. Cherif Pasha and his ministry resigned, and a new cabinet was formed under Nubar Pasha, the man of whom Gordon said that he would have to be made prime minister if anything was to be done to hold the Soudan provinces. Mustapha Pasha Fehmi was appointed minister of finance.

But events were too rapid and circumstances too difficult to be controlled either by the advice of the British government or the compliance or redetermination of the Egyptian ministry. Colonel Coetlogon, who had cleared the White Nile of the rebels and had

returned to Khartûm to take the command there, sent a message imploring the Egyptian government, as it could not relieve the garrison, to give orders for its retreat, as with almost a third part of the troops disaffected and surrounded by a hostile population they would soon be shut up within the place, unable either to retreat or to escape.

The reply of the Egyptian ministry was a telegraphic instruction that all the troops in the Soudan should be collected, Khartûm evacuated, and the stores destroyed. This was much more easily said than done, and it is possible that Nubar Pasha was aware of it.

When our government were informed that these orders had been sent they were also apprised of the enormous difficulties that lay in the way of obeying them. The civil population of Khartûm was about 11,000, the garrison under the command of Colonel Coetlogon amounted to about 6000, and, as the civilians at all events would have to make the journey by the river, several months would be required to obtain boats and make preparations for leaving the place.

After the destruction of the army of Hicks Pasha the whole Soudan was in a blaze, and though Colonel Coetlogon, on whom the command at Khartûm devolved, was doing his best to defend Khartûm and to prepare for abandoning it, it soon became a question whether he would be able to do either with the force at his disposal. All kinds of opinions had been expressed as to the best course to be adopted, but, unhappily, the rebellion did not stay while either of the recommendations that had been put forward could be reduced to practice. It was suspected in some quarters that Egyptian policy would be to let things drift and to rely on England being in some way compelled to go to the rescue. It was at one time supposed that Khartûm would be given up and Berber made the frontier post; but many who knew the country, and among them Sir Samuel Baker, thought that Khartûm could be made impregnable, a dozen steamers on the White and Blue Niles, at whose junction it is situated, putting it beyond the reach of attack. He proposed having a strong garrison at Dongola, just above the third cataract, and between Dongola

and Khartûm, a chain of fortified forts which would ensure the safety of the Nile valley, while it might be worth while to secure the aid of Abyssinia by offering her the coveted port of Massowa on the Red Sea.

This, however, was at the end of 1883, and by the time that the Nubar Pasha ministry had been formed the revolt had spread to both sides of the Blue Nile, telegraphic communication with Sennâr had been cut off, and a week later Lupton Bey reported that the natives in his province had rebelled, and the road between Messera er Rek and Dem Suleiman was stopped. Berber itself had been attacked by 4000 Bishareen Arabs, who had been repulsed by the Bashi-Bazouks of the garrison. Colonel Coetlogon's message had said that it might be possible to evacuate Khartûm if orders reached him at once, but that it would soon be impossible. Not only were the garrison and the Arab and foreign Christian population of the town to be considered, but the evacuation of the province would have to be effected, and the entire force south of the proposed frontier exceeded 40,000.

It was reported that all the military and civil officials knew that the town, without large supports, was untenable. Those of the inhabitants who held large stores of merchandise naturally wished that the town might be held to the bitter end. The total of soldiers in the place was 6100 men, of whom 2000 were Shaggeyas, known to be disaffected, and black troops who were not trustworthy. The whole garrison was demoralized on account of the long arrears of pay due to them. The earthworks were about 8000 mètres in extent.

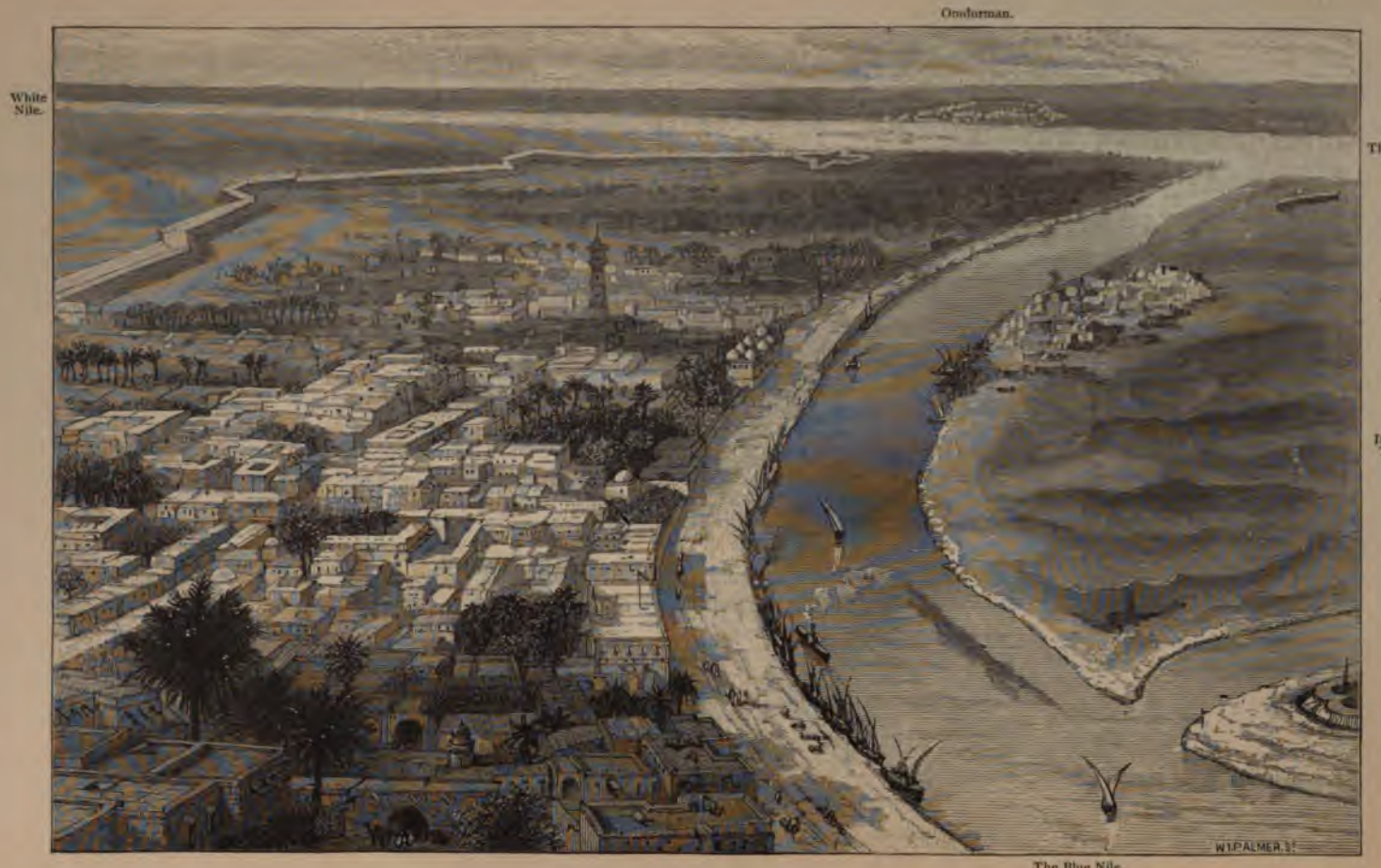
The population, slaves, and servants would have to be saved before the army marched. To effect this there were only two small and old steamers which could go to Berber. It was evident that the evacuation would take months to accomplish, and the river was low.

On the 14th of January the steamer *Ismailia* arrived at Khartûm from Equatorial Africa, and on board was Dr. Bohndorf, a gentleman who had travelled for five years in the equatorial provinces. He reported that Jean Maria Schuver, a Dutch

explorer who had left Khartûm in the previous July on the same steamer, had quitted the vessel in opposition to the authorities, and had tried to reach Lupton Bey in the Bahr Gazelle by a short cut, but had been attacked and killed by the Dingas. Lupton Bey was completely cut off. The enemy was approaching toward Khartûm from more than one direction. In a few days it was deemed very improbable that the retreat of the inhabitants could be effected. A deadlock seemed to be imminent if it had not already occurred. Colonel D. Stewart, who had been so excellently employed in the personal inquiry and report with respect to the provinces of the Soudan in 1883, of which we have already noticed the importance, had come to England after the completion of the commission with which he had been intrusted, and the report which was at that time compiled in the intelligence branch of the quartermaster-general's department of the war office and afterwards published, contained much of the valuable information that he was able to impart to the government.

As the inquiries which Colonel Stewart had undertaken were completed there was no further occasion for him to remain in the Soudan, especially after affairs at Khartûm had been placed in the hands of officers appointed by the khedive.

The repeated declarations of the British government that it would undertake no responsibilities in the Soudan were maintained, and the ministry was anxious not to take any step that would seem to encourage the Egyptians to rely on their interposition for the purpose of aiding in the suppression of the Mahdi's rebellion, or the protection of the provinces beyond the actual Egyptian territory; but they were now urged on both sides to overpass the boundary-line which they had marked as the limit of their policy. The Egyptian government was apparently waiting either helplessly or intentionally without affording any adequate assistance to Khartûm, and it was only after the emphatic advice of the English cabinet that the order to retreat was sent to Colonel Coetlogon, too late for him then to be able to obey the instructions without immediate and effectual aid, which was not forthcoming.




KHARTÛM, THE CHIEF TOWN OF THE SOUDAN - LOOKING NORTH.

At the same time, as we have seen, the attempts of the Egyptian forces to relieve the garrisons at Tokar and Sinkat, and to protect Suakim, had been entirely inadequate, and Baker Pasha was preparing to proceed against the rebels in the Eastern Soudan with what proved to be another inadequate force.

It was then that our ministry was being assailed not only by opponents in parliament, but by a large section, if not by a majority in the country, and by many of the more influential newspapers. Public opinion appeared to be changing if that of the government was not, and it cannot be denied that the position which the ministry had assumed was one exceedingly difficult if not altogether untenable. We had an army of protection, if not of occupation, in Egypt, where the government of the country had been remodelled under a scheme of reformed administration which they had initiated. Our influence was paramount, so that the "advice" to abandon the Soudan provinces was followed by a resignation of the Egyptian ministry, and the appointment of another cabinet ready to carry out the behests of the protecting power, which was thereby compelled to take a more active part in Egyptian policy. Our representative at Cairo, Sir Evelyn Baring (who had succeeded Mr. Malet), was ready to insist on advice being followed, though it was opposed to the wishes and sentiments of the khedive and most of his ministers, and not in complete accordance with the opinion of those who had had most experience of the country, including Sir Samuel Baker and General Gordon. The policy of our government was strained by the force of events, and the refusal to take some further measures for the relief of the imperilled garrisons grew fainter.

No government could have foreseen the extraordinary spread of the Mahdi's insurrection. Any government would perhaps have been justified, at the time of the intervention to suppress Arabi, in announcing that the occupation of Egypt by their troops would be solely for the purpose of protecting foreign residents; and as it had been asked for by the Egyptian government, and complacently endorsed by the European powers, that its purpose was defined, and should not be changed into that of affording

permanent and exterior aid to the khedive in dealing with revolted provinces. But conditions changed with such rapidity that the very position we had been obliged to assume in relation to the organization of a better government for the prevention of future rebellion, seemed to necessitate the abandonment of the policy which had been announced, namely, limited and temporary protection both of loyal Egyptians and of foreigners. We had remained to settle the consequences of our interposition in an internal rebellion, and now were face to face with an insurrection not only in the distant western provinces, but in the eastern district, where the seaboard from Massowa to Suakim, and inland as far as the White Nile, was threatened.

Neither the pressure of events, made almost irretrievable by the delays and incapacity of the Egyptian government to deal with them, nor the persistent and repeated censure of the opposition, nor the change of opinion which was to be observed in the country, drove Mr. Gladstone's ministry to what their opponents called prompt, but which they would have designated rash action. They were determined to do nothing which would amount to an armed intervention necessitating the continued occupation of the country, and they would not recede from their refusal to interpose for the purpose of enabling Egypt to retain Khartûm and the western provinces. At the same time they had prepared to take another step which, as was afterwards proved, indefinitely increased their responsibility, and gave a new argument to the few opponents who declared that we ought never to have meddled with Egyptian affairs at all nor fired a shot at Alexandria. It was determined that though we could not consistently aid in the retention of Khartûm and the other strongholds of the Soudan provinces by the Egyptian government, we might, in accordance with advice which had been so peremptory as to put an end to a ministry, assist in the evacuation of these places and the establishment in them of a native government of some kind.

It is not surprising that, directly this solution of the difficulty appeared possible, the thoughts of the responsible ministers should turn to General Gordon, whose remarkable successes in China and

his extraordinary achievements in the Soudan, no less than his courage, honesty, and singleness of purpose, seemed to them most eminently to qualify him for conducting such an enterprise as that of bringing out the inhabitants of Khartûm in safety, and exercising some influence upon the natives of the adjacent provinces.

That the government had been looking ahead further than their assailants had given them credit for, was afterwards shown when it transpired that months before Colonel Coetlogon's message asking for aid had reached Cairo they had proposed to the Egyptian government that General Gordon should be commissioned to go to the Western Soudan; but the suggestion was not received with favour either by them or by our own representative at Cairo. They thought that under the circumstances then existing it would not be desirable for General Gordon to go out, and it was to be regretted, as events showed, that our government did not either abandon the proposal altogether or insist on its being accepted promptly. This, however, would have been undertaking the kind of responsibility which they had all along denied and refused, and as General Gordon himself was by no means anxious to go at that time the matter remained in abeyance.

At the end of 1883, and at the opening of 1884, however, General Gordon's reluctance had considerably diminished, and at the same time his name was being publicly mentioned as that of the man who could, if any man could, undertake the difficult task of bringing the inhabitants of Khartûm safely to Suakim or to Cairo, and pacifying the surrounding population. The plan was being everywhere talked about, and it was strongly advocated by the press, for in the first days of January the representative of an influential evening newspaper published a statement by General Gordon himself which is of so much importance in estimating the position of affairs, and also the attitude of Gordon in relation to them, that the greater part of it may with advantage come into this narrative:—

'So you would abandon the Soudan? But the Eastern Soudan is indispensable to Egypt. It will cost you far more to retain your hold upon Egypt proper, if you abandon your hold

of the Eastern Soudan to the Mahdi or to the Turk, than it would to retain your hold upon Eastern Soudan by the aid of such material as exists in the provinces. Darfûr and Kordofan must be abandoned. That I admit; but the provinces lying to the east of the White Nile should be retained, and north of Sennâr. The danger to be feared is not that the Mahdi will march northward through Wady Halfa; on the contrary, it is very improbable that he will ever go so far north. The danger is altogether of a different nature. It arises from the influence which the spectacle of a conquering Mohammedan power established close to your frontiers will exercise upon the population which you govern. In all the cities in Egypt it will be felt that what the Mahdi has done they may do; and as he has driven out the intruder and the infidel, they may do the same. Nor is it only England that has to face this danger. The success of the Mahdi has already excited dangerous fermentation in Arabia and Syria. Placards have been posted in Damascus calling upon the population to rise and drive out the Turks. If the whole of the Eastern Soudan is surrendered to the Mahdi, the Arab tribes on both sides of the Red Sea will take fire. In self-defence the Turks are bound to do something to cope with so formidable a danger, for it is quite possible that if nothing is done the whole of the Eastern question may be reopened by the triumph of the Mahdi. I see it is proposed to fortify Wady Halfa, and prepare there to resist the Mahdi's attack. You might as well fortify against a fever. Contagion of that kind cannot be kept out by fortifications and garrisons. But that it is real and that it does exist will be denied by no one cognizant with Egypt and the East. In self-defence, the policy of evacuation cannot possibly be justified.

There is another aspect of the question. You have 6000 men in Khartûm. What are you going to do with them? You have garrisons in Darfûr, in Bahr Gazelle, and Gondokoro. Are they to be sacrificed? Their only offence is their loyalty to their sovereign. For their fidelity you are going to abandon them to their fate. You say they are to retire upon Wady Halfa. But

Gondokoro is 1500 miles from Khartûm, and Khartûm is 350 only from Wady Halfa. How will you move your 6000 men from Khartûm—to say nothing of other places—and all the Europeans in that city through the desert to Wady Halfa? Where are you going to get the camels to take them away? Will the Mahdi supply them? If they are to escape with their lives, the garrison will not be allowed to leave with a coat on their backs. They will be plundered to the skin, and even then their lives may not be spared. Whatever you may decide about evacuation, you cannot evacuate, because your army cannot be moved. You must either surrender absolutely to the Mahdi or defend Khartûm at all hazards. The latter is the only course which ought to be entertained. There is no serious difficulty about it. The Mahdi's forces will fall to pieces of themselves; but if in a moment of panic orders are issued for the abandonment of the whole of the Eastern Soudan a blow will be struck against the security of Egypt and the peace of the East which may have fatal consequences.

The great evil is not at Khartûm, but at Cairo. It is the weakness of Cairo which produces disaster in the Soudan. It is because Hicks was not adequately supported at the first, but was thrust forward upon an impossible enterprise by the men who had refused him supplies when a decisive blow might have been struck, that the Western Soudan has been sacrificed. The Eastern Soudan may, however, be saved if there is a firm hand placed at the helm in Egypt. Everything depends on that.

What, then, you ask, should be done? I reply, Place Nubar in power. Nubar is the one supremely able man among Egyptian ministers. He is proof against foreign intrigue, and he thoroughly understands the situation. Place him in power, support him through thick and thin, give him a free hand; and let it be distinctly understood that no intrigues either on the part of Tewfik or any of Nubar's rivals will be allowed for a moment to interfere with the execution of his plans. You are sure to find that the energetic support of Nubar will sooner or later bring you into collision with the khedive; but if that sovereign really desires, as he says, the welfare of his country, it will be necessary

for you to protect Nubar's administration from any direct or indirect interference on his part. Nubar can be depended upon; that I can guarantee. He will not take office without knowing that he is to have his own way; but if he takes office it is the best security that you can have for the restoration of order to the country. Especially is this the case with the Soudan. Nubar should be left untrammelled by any stipulations concerning the evacuation of Khartûm. There is no hurry. The garrisons can hold their own at present. Let them continue to hold on until disunion and tribal jealousies have worked their natural results in the camp of the Mahdi. Nubar should be free to deal with the Soudan in his own way. How he will deal with the Soudan of course I cannot profess to say, but I should imagine that he would appoint a governor-general at Khartûm with full powers, and furnish him with two millions sterling—a large sum, no doubt, but a sum which had much better be spent now than wasted in a vain attempt to avert the consequences of an ill-timed surrender. Sir Samuel Baker, who possesses the essential energy and single tongue requisite for the office, might be appointed governor-general of the Soudan; and he might take his brother as commander-in-chief.

It should be proclaimed in the hearing of all the Soudanese, and engraved on tablets of brass, that a permanent constitution was granted to the Soudanese by which no Turk or Circassian would ever be allowed to enter the province to plunder its inhabitants in order to fill his own pockets, and that no immediate emancipation of slaves would be attempted. Immediate emancipation was denounced in 1833 as confiscation in England, and it is no less confiscation in the Soudan to-day. Whatever is done in that direction should be done gradually, and by a process of registration. Mixed tribunals might be established, if Nubar thought fit, in which European judges would co-operate with the natives in the administration of justice. Police inspectors also might be appointed, and adequate measures taken to root out the abuses which prevail in the prisons.

With regard to Darfûr, I should think that Nubar would

probably send back the family and the heir of the Sultan of Darfûr. If subsidized by the government and sent back with Sir Samuel Baker, he would not have much difficulty in regaining possession of the kingdom of Darfûr, which was formerly one of the best governed of African countries. As regards Abyssinia, the old warning should not be lost sight of—'Put not your trust in princes;' and place no reliance upon the King of Abyssinia, at least outside his own country. Zoula and Bogos might be ceded to him with advantage, and the free right of entry by the port of Massowa might be added; but it would be a mistake to give him possession of Massowa, which he would ruin. A commission might also be sent down with advantage to examine the state of things in Harrar, opposite Aden, and see what iniquities are going on there, as also at Berbera and Zeila. By these means, and by the adoption of a steady, consistent policy at headquarters, it would be possible—not to say easy—to re-establish the authority of the khedive between the Red Sea and Sennâr.

As to the cost of the Soudan, it is a mistake to suppose that it will necessarily be a charge on the Egyptian exchequer. It will cost two millions to relieve the garrisons and to quell the revolt; but that expenditure must be incurred any way; and in all probability, if the garrisons are handed over to be massacred and the country evacuated, the ultimate expenditure would exceed that sum. At first, until the country is pacified, the Soudan will need a subsidy of £200,000 a year from Egypt That, however, would be temporary. During the last years of my administration the Soudan involved no charge upon the Egyptian exchequer. The bad provinces were balanced against the good, and an equilibrium was established. The Soudan will never be a source of revenue to Egypt, but it need not be a source of expense. That deficits have arisen, and that the present disaster has occurred, is entirely attributable to a single cause—and that is the grossest misgovernment.

The cause of the rising in the Soudan is the cause of all popular risings against Turkish rule wherever they have occurred. No one who has been in a Turkish province and has witnessed

the results of the Bashi-Bazouk system, which excited so much indignation some time ago in Bulgaria, will need to be told why the people of the Soudan have risen in revolt against the khedive. The Turks, the Circassians, and the Bashi-Bazouks have plundered and oppressed the people in the Soudan, as they plundered and oppressed them in the Balkan peninsula. Oppression begat discontent; discontent necessitated an increase of the armed force at the disposal of the authorities; this increase of the army force involved an increase of expenditure, which again was attempted to be met by increasing taxation, and that still further increased the discontent. And so things went on in a dismal circle until they culminated, after repeated deficits, in a disastrous rebellion. That the people were justified in rebelling nobody who knows the treatment to which they were subjected will attempt to deny. Their cries were absolutely unheeded at Cairo. In despair they had recourse to the only method by which they could make their wrongs known; and, on the same principle that Absalom fired the corn of Joab, so they rallied round the Mahdi, who exhorted them to revolt against the Turkish yoke. I am convinced that it is an entire mistake to regard the Mahdi as in any sense a religious leader—he personifies popular discontent.

All the Soudanese are potential Mahdis, just as all the Egyptians are potential Arabis. The movement is not religious, but an outbreak of despair. Three times over I warned the late khedive that it would be impossible to govern the Soudan on the old system after my appointment to the governor-generalship. During the three years that I wielded full powers in the Soudan I taught the natives that they had a right to exist. I waged war against the Turks and Circassians who had harried the population. I had taught them something of the meaning of liberty and justice, and accustomed them to a higher ideal of government than that with which they had previously been acquainted. As soon as I had gone the Turks and Circassians returned in full force; the old Bashi-Bazouk system was re-established; my old employés were persecuted; and a population which had begun to appreciate something like decent government was flung back to suffer the worst

excesses of Turkish rule. The inevitable result followed; and thus it may be said that the egg of the present rebellion was laid in the three years during which I was allowed to govern the Soudan on other than Turkish principles.

The Soudanese are a very nice people. They deserve the sincere compassion and sympathy of all civilized men. I got on very well with them, and I am sincerely sorry at the prospect of seeing them handed over to be ground down once more by their Turkish and Circassian oppressors. Yet, unless an attempt is made to hold on to the present garrisons, it is inevitable that the Turks, for the sake of self-preservation, must attempt to crush them. They deserve a better fate. It ought not to be impossible to come to terms with them, to grant them a free amnesty for the past, to offer them security for decent government in the future. If this were done, and the government intrusted to a man whose word was truth, all might yet be re-established. So far from believing it impossible to make an arrangement with the Mahdi, I strongly suspect that he is a mere puppet put forward by Ilyas, Zebehr's father-in-law, and the largest slave-owner in Obeid, and that he has assumed a religious title to give colour to his defence of the popular rights.

There is one subject on which I cannot imagine anyone can differ about. That is the impolicy of announcing our intention to evacuate Khartûm. Even if we were bound to do so we should have said nothing about it. The moment it is known that we have given up the game, every man will go over to the Mahdi. All men worship the rising sun. The difficulties of evacuation will be enormously increased, if, indeed, the withdrawal of our garrison is not rendered impossible.

The late khedive, who is one of the ablest and worst-used men in Europe, would not have made such a mistake, and under him the condition of Egypt proper was much better than it is to-day. Now, with regard to Egypt, the same principle should be observed that must be acted upon in the Soudan. Let your foundations be broad and firm, and based upon the contentment and welfare of the people. Hitherto, both in the Soudan and in

Egypt, instead of constructing the social edifice like a pyramid, upon its base, we have been rearing an obelisk which a single push may overturn. Our safety in Egypt is to do something for the people. That is to say, you must reduce their rent, rescue them from the usurers, and retrench expenditure. Nine-tenths of the European employés might probably be weeded out with advantage. The remaining tenth—thoroughly efficient—should be retained; but whatever you do, do not break up Sir Evelyn Wood's army, which is destined to do good work. Stiffen it as much as you please, but with Englishmen, not with Circassians. Circassians are as much foreigners in Egypt as Englishmen are, and certainly not more popular. As for the European population, let them have charters for the formation of municipal councils, for raising volunteer corps, and for organizing in their own defence. Anything more shameful than the flight from Egypt in 1882 I never read. Let them take an example from Shanghai, where the European settlement provides for its own defence and its own government. I should like to see a competent special commissioner of the highest standing—such a man, for instance, as Mr. W. E. Forster, who is free at once from traditions of the elders and of the foreign office, and of the bondholders—sent out to put Nubar in the saddle, sift out unnecessary employés, and warn evil-doers in the highest places that they will not be allowed to play any tricks. If that were done it would give confidence everywhere, and I see no reason why the last British soldier should not be withdrawn from Egypt in six months' time.

I hope you will explain that I did not wish to press my opinions upon the public. I am very reluctant to say anything calculated to embarrass the government in a very difficult crisis; but when you appealed to me I did feel moved at the thought of the poor Soudanese, whom I knew so well and loved so much; and I thought that for once I might, for their sake, depart from the resolution which I had formed in my mind to leave these things to be governed by the Higher Power which cannot err, without comment on my part. They are a good people, the poor Soudanese, and if I can do anything for them I shall be only too

glad. But although I have spoken to you quite frankly, I should be much obliged if, when you publish these remarks, you would let it be distinctly understood that I do not wish to depart again from the rule which I have mentioned."

Our government, doubtless, felt that they could only maintain the refusal to interpose for the purpose of maintaining the Egyptian rule in the Soudan by not suffering themselves to be driven either by the imperfect conclusions which had begun to influence a large proportion of the public, or by the opposition, who were constantly urging them to a course which would have resulted either in withdrawing the British troops and leaving the khedive to shift for himself in Egypt, with the probability of renewed disturbances at Cairo and other parts of the country, or in engaging in military operations which would involve active occupation of Egypt, the establishment of a British protectorate, and probably the actual administration of the affairs of the country. The persistency with which the ministry were urged both by the opposition and the public had the effect of closing their mouths, while demands for a distinct statement of their ultimate intentions were made while the course of events rendered a declaration of their future course more and more difficult if not altogether impossible. There is no need to occupy these pages with a detailed account of the proceedings in parliament which harassed the ministry, at a time, too, when the questions of the provisions of a new extension of the franchise, and a redistribution of parliamentary representation, were being keenly discussed, and the affairs of Ireland claimed earnest and unremitting attention.

On the 15th of January Mr. Chamberlain, speaking at Newcastle, declared that the government would leave neither Ireland nor Egypt to become a prey to anarchy. He maintained that in spite of all drawbacks and delays, such as the outbreak of cholera, the collapse of the Egyptian administration, and the defeat of the Egyptian forces in the Soudan, for none of which the English government were responsible, the duty of that government was clear—to fulfil the pledges already given, of leaving Egypt to the

Egyptians so soon as order was re-established and institutions with some reasonable prospect of stability were created. They could not leave Egypt to anarchy, but, on the other hand, they did not, and ought not to withdraw any of the assurances they had given. The task was likely to be more difficult than they had supposed, and to take a longer time than they had anticipated.

This was just before the engagement of the services of General Gordon to go to Khartûm, and at that time, as we have seen, the condition of the beleaguered garrison and the people at Sinkat was desperate, and General Baker Pasha was preparing to go to its relief, with what result we already know.

Notwithstanding General Gordon's alleged previous reluctance to undertake the mission that was now offered him, he exhibited his usual amazing energy, promptitude, and fearlessness directly he had consented to go to Khartûm. On the 7th of January he had come from Brussels to England on a short farewell visit to his sister, for he had accepted a high commission from the King of the Belgians to go to the head of the Congo to endeavour to suppress slavery there and to organize the government of the territory. He had only been at Southampton a few hours when, in reply to inquiries put to him by the editor of an evening paper,[1] he made the communication which we have read. On the 16th he returned to Brussels to take his final instructions, and was ready to start on his journey to the Congo when he received a telegram from the government, which brought him back to London on the 18th. A few hours of earnest consultation decided him to undertake the arduous duty proposed by the ministry, and on being asked when he could start for the Soudan he replied that he should be ready to go by that night's Indian mail train from Charing Cross. There were only a few minutes in which to take leave of his friends, and much of his baggage had to be sent after him. At Charing Cross he was met by the Duke of Cambridge, who had known him from boyhood, by Lord Wolseley, his comrade in the Crimea, Colonel Brocklehurst, and Mr. Robert Gordon, his nephew and Lord Hartington's secretary. Lord Wolseley carried the

[1] The *Pall Mall Gazette.*

general's portmanteau, Lord Granville took his ticket for him, and the Duke of Cambridge held open the carriage door. He left London, at all events, with the sense that he was sped on his way by the good wishes of friends and comrades, and that the hearts of his countrymen beat in sympathy with him in the work that it was now known he had undertaken. That he entirely shared the views of the government is improbable. He must have known that the pressure of rapidly changing conditions in the rebellious province to which he was going, and the difficulties that might arise because of official complications at Cairo, would make it necessary for him to have a free hand, and that he could not be bound by anything like an unalterable programme. This freedom was accorded and understood; but inevitably when a change of circumstances came which seemed to necessitate a course that the government thought would cancel their declarations of the motives and the policy which led to their having sent a representative to the Soudan, complication arose, and the strongly-expressed advice of the envoy was contrary to the opinion and to the principles on which the government had interposed for the purpose of evacuating the garrisons of the Soudan provinces. Gordon's own views changed on successive occasions—or, at all events, the practical conclusions at which he seemed to have arrived at a later date differed very considerably from those which he had been commissioned to carry out. These vicissitudes of expediency were among the difficultjes which beset the government and appeared likely to become insuperable, especially as the conditions of affairs at Berber and Khartûm could only be known by messages which for a long time gave no ground for supposing that it was necessary, even if it had been practicable, to afford any assistance of a kind that would have been outside the scope or the purpose of Gordon's endeavour. At a later period of the year the difficulties were increased by the means of regular communication being interrupted, and by several messages which were sent to and from the distant and beleaguered town being intercepted.

General Gordon had little doubt of the success of his mission, so far as the evacuation of Khartûm went, when he started on his

journey, though Sir Samuel Baker had said that the effort would be too late. It is probable, also, that though he was not less certain of the establishment of a settled government in the Soudan, he did not entirely agree with the conclusions of the ministry, though he apparently accepted without demur the terms of his instructions. He is reported to have said just before his departure from London: "I go to cut the dog's tail off. I've got my orders, and I'll do it *coûte que coûte*." It was with his usual calm and singularly undemonstrative confidence that he said good-bye to the friends who saw him off by the train, which was delayed for a quarter of an hour that there might be a last word or two on the subject of his mission, before he and Colonel Stewart, who had been appointed his military secretary, started on that long last journey to the Soudan.

Nine days afterwards a characteristic telegram was received from Cairo by the garrison at Khartûm signed "Gordon," and saying: "You are men, not women. Be not afraid. I am coming."

When Gordon resigned his governor-generalship of the Soudan in 1879, and, after concluding the mission to Abyssinia which he had undertaken at the request of the new khedive, left Massowa for England, he had formed, and with some reason, an unfavourable opinion of Tewfik Pasha. He somewhat resented the deposition of Ismail, who had always treated him personally with consideration, and had placed the utmost confidence in him. "You say I do not trust Englishmen," the ex-khedive had said on one occasion. "Do I not trust Gordon Pasha? I trust him thoroughly, for he is an honest man, and not a diplomatist, but an administrator." Gordon was one of those whom Ismail had deceived by failing to support him, and by allowing the influence of officials at Cairo to thwart the plans of the governor-general, but there was no ill feeling. The subject of Ismail's rule was one of those about which Gordon changed his mind. "It is a blessing for Egypt that he is gone," he said in 1879.[1] Yet some of his later expressions intimate that he was afterwards strongly in favour of a restoration of Ismail to the viceroyalty.

[1] Vol. i. p. 211.

We know that if he had found it difficult to continue in office under Ismail and his ministry, he found it impossible under Tewfik, with the renewed opposition of Riaz, Cherif, and Nubar, who endeavoured to interfere with his government of the Soudan. He had determined to resign before he consented to go to Abyssinia as an envoy of the new khedive. The manner in which the ministers received his communications of the result of his mission had confirmed his resolution to leave the country which had nearly cost him his life, but where he left many good friends and grateful memories among the people over whom he had been placed in authority. "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin," he telegraphed to one of the corrupt and retrogressive pashas who had been appointed in the provinces which he had so lately left, after having cut off the slave-dealers in their strongholds and secured the grateful affection of the formerly oppressed people. In April, 1879, he had said: "If the liberation of slaves takes place in 1884, and if the present system of government goes on, there cannot fail to be a revolt of the whole country." In April, 1880, just a year later, he wrote, "I have learned with equal pain and indignation that the khedive and his subordinate officers have permitted the resuscitation of the slave-trade in Darfûr and the other provinces of Central and Equatorial Africa, and that fresh parties of slave-hunters are forming at Obeid in Kordofan, and that every order which I gave concerning the suppression of this abomination has been cancelled." He had then left Gessi to finish the work that remained to be done in the Bahr Gazelle, and it was completed, but the appointment of Raouf Pasha as governor-general seemed to be bringing back the old order of things. Gessi, as we have seen, left the Bahr Gazelle in the autumn of 1880. He with great difficulty made his way to Khartûm. In April, 1881, he died in Suez.[1] From that time the western provinces of the Soudan may be said to have been lost to Egypt. The work that Gordon had effected was undone. In the following month (May, 1881) the "Mahdi" had began to make his pretensions; the slave-dealers and slave-owners saw that here was an opportunity

[1] Vol i. p. 214.

for an insurrection that would restore their power and influence. We have seen how Gordon longed for rest, how in his half-humorous way he had a dream of coming to England to find a period of leisure without making engagements, or going out to dinner, but with full liberty to lie late in bed, to read and stroll about, and to eat oysters for lunch. He had at anyrate come to very definite conclusions as to the position of any European entering on important service for an oriental state, and he formulated his experience briefly as follows:—

1. Any foreigner entering the service of an oriental state may be sure that no native official will ever be punished, except in name, for anything he may do; he may be certain also that, unless he can hold his own by his own right hand, he will fall; and that it is not in the power, even if it is in the inclination (?) of the ruler of that state to help him.

2. A foreigner cannot go one-tenth as far in the use of—or rather abuse of—his authority as a native; the people will put up with the one, but not with the other, if he exceeds a certain limit.

3. A foreigner, seeing axiom No. 1, is obliged, if he is to hold his place, to depart from European rules, and use, to some extent, arbitrary (*i.e.* oriental) means for defence and offence.

4. A foreigner, if conjointly charged with natives to carry out any work, may rest assured that his great enemies are those with whom he takes counsel, and that they are ready to be crushed if they can bring him down with them, and he may generally be sure that the ruler is not likely to do more than regret (?) his fall.

5. A foreigner, to succeed, must so regulate his affairs that no gain, but sheer loss, to the many would be incurred by his fall. (I mean *tangible* gain—patriotic sentiments, or advantage to the country, or glory, are sentiments which never weigh in the scale. Actual coin is Allah, and "there is none but" it.) When men reason thus, then fomenters of trouble find no hearers; but neglect this, and every one is ears. This is very natural and not indigenous to the East. When a foreigner has so regulated affairs that his fall will be a loss to the many, *then* he may afford to look

*his* enemies in the face, and not need the smile of the sultan or ameer.

These are my views formed from experience; and they are true for Turkey, Egypt, and China, and, I expect, for all the East.

*P.S.*—Joseph was the first foreigner in the service of Egypt; he took good care to have the masses indebted to him through his having the means to help them. A minister of finance should never fall—for he holds the purse.

The Egyptian people are a servile race, as foretold they should be; and not only do they not deserve a better government than they have, but they would not be content under a better government. The government is the outcoming of the people, it fitly represents them; it is a fallacy to suppose a good government would alter their nature—it can never do so. If the people were raised the bad government would disappear. It is a fault to attempt a remedy in the branches, seek it in the roots."

Gordon had only a few weeks to call his own after his return to England at the end of December, 1879, and he had very great difficulty in evading the assiduous attentions of people who desired to lionize him and interview him, while the newspapers were loud in their praise of the late Governor-general of the Soudan, for whom somebody had invented the title of "the uncrowned king."

In the spring of 1880 the government of Lord Beaconsfield had been succeeded by that of Mr. Gladstone, and the Marquis of Ripon had been appointed Viceroy of India in place of Lord Lytton. Everybody who heard of it was surprised that the noble lord had requested General Gordon to accept the appointment of private secretary, and were far more surprised that the man who had so recently claimed and exercised almost uncontrolled power over a vast province should have accepted such an office. It was believed that some extraordinary changes were to be effected in the administration of the affairs of the government of India; that the condition of Central Asia would receive prompt and decisive attention; that the Afghan question would be committed to the new secretary for consideration, and that with him would rest its

practical settlement. Various speculations were afloat to account for the appointment of so famous and energetic a man to fill what had been regarded, if not as an inferior, at all events as a comparatively irresponsible and subordinate post, and "society" in Calcutta was in a flutter at the probability of this clear-eyed, simple-minded, plain-living satirist of shows and frivolities coming into its midst with a personal influence which would not be snubbed down or ignored, and a position and reputation so high that it would be impossible to affect indifference, especially if it should turn out to be true that he had accepted the secretaryship that he might have an opportunity of settling the Anglo-Russian frontier.

But the public wonder and the half dismay of Indian fashionable circles were soon dissipated. The one was turned into curiosity, the other was relieved, by the sudden announcement that Gordon had relinquished the secretaryship almost before he could have fulfilled any of its duties. He had left London with the viceroy in the latter part of May, and the public who had followed the telegraphic reports of the journey had scarcely learned that it had terminated at Bombay when the intelligence also arrived that Gordon had resigned. Anybody who knew him must have known that, though he had accepted the appointment in good faith and because he never thought about his own personal demands in relation to any work that he believed it might be his duty to do, he would never be able to submit to the merely subordinate work of a secretary. It was not reasonable to suppose that a man who had been a kind of sultan over a large territory requiring absolute authority on the part of its governor, would be able to carry out the orders of a superior in a direction which he might be convinced was altogether a wrong one, and yet refrain from either interference or remonstrance, except perhaps in the way of a suggestion made with bated breath. It was certainly a good thing that he discovered the mistake he had made before it had become deplorable by a collision between him and his superiors who represented the government. Evidently he had found out, not only that it would be disastrous for him to abide by his hasty decision, but that it was actually impossible. He explained his

resignation of the post in a few words, in which he simply acknowledged that he had made a mistake. "Men at times, owing to the mysteries of Providence, form judgments which they afterwards repent of. This is my case in accepting the appointment Lord Ripon honoured me in offering me. I repented of my act as soon as I had accepted the appointment, and I deeply regret that I had not the moral courage to say so at that time. Nothing could have exceeded the kindness and consideration with which Lord Ripon has treated me. I have never met anyone with whom I could have felt greater sympathy in the arduous task he has undertaken."

It had been evident to everybody—so everybody said—that a man like Gordon could not become a comparative cipher and occupy the private secretary's office in Government House; but it had not seemed impossible to himself until he began to reflect on the limitations to which he would be subject in the discharge of his duties. That he should have formed a judgment that he afterwards (and even very soon afterwards) repented of was, it may be said, not altogether outside his experience any more than it was outside that of others. In the Soudan he had to deal with such a network of treachery, greed, and unscrupulous falsehood that it was exceedingly difficult to form immediately, judgments which were not afterwards either cancelled or greatly modified by circumstances, or the crooked conduct of the men by whom he was surrounded. These changes of judgment were among the causes of the uncertainty which attended the subsequent relations between him and the government after he had gone out to Khartûm.

Gordon had intended to leave Bombay for Zanzibar, where he proposed to help the sultan, Syed Burghash, against the slave-dealers, when a telegram reached him from Mr. Campbell, the agent in London of Mr. Hart, the Chinese commissioner of customs, to whom the message had been sent from Gordon's former colleague, Li Hung Chang. This telegram ran, "I am directed to invite you to China. Please come and see for yourself. This opportunity for doing really useful work on a large scale

ought not to be lost. Work, position, conditions can all be arranged with yourself here to your satisfaction. Do take six months' leave and come." The answer returned to London was, "Inform Hart Gordon will leave for Shanghai first opportunity. As for conditions, Gordon indifferent."

It must be remembered that General Gordon was still an officer in the British service, and, of course, had to apply to the war-office for leave to go to China, where his friend "Li," who had been the imperialist governor-general of the Kiang provinces co-operating with the commander of the "ever-victorious army" to quell the Tai-ping rebellion, was anxiously awaiting that commander who had been known all over Europe as "Chinese Gordon."

The war-office authorities naturally hesitated to grant leave of absence to an officer of the British service unless he could state his purpose in going to China and the position he was to hold there, for it was with Russia that the Chinese were contemplating hostilities in connection with the operations at Kashgar. In answer to these inquiries he could only reply, "I am ignorant;" but that there might be no obstacle in the way, he sent in the resignation of his commission, and sailed for Hong-Kong. He certainly had no reason to complain of any undue restraint being placed upon him by the military authorities, especially as the news of his intention was likely to, and afterwards did, cause great anger and excitement in Russia. His resignation was not accepted, and he received permission to go on condition that he should not enter on any military service. Even to this he would not pledge himself. All he would say was, "My fixed desire is to persuade the Chinese not to go to war with Russia, both in their own interests and those of the world, and especially those of England. To me it appears that the questions in dispute cannot be of such vital importance that an arrangement could not be come to by concessions on both sides. Whether I succeed in being heard or not is not in my hands. I protest, however, against being regarded as one who wishes for war in any country, far less in China. In the event of war breaking out I could not answer how I should act for the present; but I shall ardently desire a speedy peace. Inclined

as I am, with only a small degree of admiration for military exploits, I esteem it a far greater honour to promote peace than to gain any petty honours in a wretched war."

Li Hung Chang, of whom Gordon had said that he was the ablest man in China, had risen to the highest position in the empire, and was now little less than prime minister, but with the suspicion in the Celestial court that he was possessed of an overweening ambition, and of a damaging inclination to adopt the methods and progressive policy of foreign teachers, even to the extent of seeking the permanent aid of foreign arms, and yet fortunately he and Prince Kung, of whom he was guardian, were in favour of peace, while his rival minister Tso and Prince Chun were advocating war General Gordon arrived at Hong-Kong on the 2d of July, and after a short stay with Sir John and Lady Hennesey at Government House, went to visit the viceroy at Canton, where he distinctly told his numerous friends in answer to their inquiries that his visit was unofficial, that he was there on a holiday to see his old friend Li, and that his views would be opposed to a proposal to form an Anglo-Chinese military force in case of war, as he should strongly advise the Chinese to use their own army. He spoke in the same way at Tientsin and at Pekin, where Li Hung Chang received him with effusive welcome, falling on his neck and kissing him, with the conviction that he had now a powerful supporter in the man who, seventeen years before, had earned a right to speak in Chinese councils. Gordon lost no time before conferring with the nobles and mandarins, he himself being one of them by the imperial rank bestowed on him after the suppression of the Tai-ping rebellion He was resolute and outspoken in advising peace. His voice prevailed, and perhaps mainly because he gave formal expression to his advice in a memorandum which strongly opposed the employment of a foreign force, as he contended that China possessed a long-used military organization, a regular military discipline which should be left intact, as it was suited to her people, who in numbers had the advantage over other powers, were inured to hardships, and could be made formidable by being armed with breech-loaders, to the

use of which they should be taught to become accustomed. His memorandum went much further than this, for it entered with considerable minuteness into the system on which the Chinese army should be trained, the arms and artillery which should be furnished to it, the manner in which such arms and munitions might be provided, and the methods by which the army should operate in the field and under the conditions of actual warfare, some of the tactics which he recommended having been apparently taken from his observations of the natives in the Soudan. One passage of the document is very peculiar:—"China should have a few small-bored, very long range wall-pieces, rifled and breech-loaders. They are light to carry, and if placed a long way off will be safe from attack. If the enemy comes out to take them the Chinese can run away; and if the enemy takes one or two, it is no loss. Firing them in the enemy's camp a long way off would prevent the enemy sleeping; and if he does not sleep, then he gets ill and goes into hospital, and then needs other enemies to take care of him, and thus the enemy's numbers are reduced." One could well fancy that there is a little of Gordon's frequently irrepressible satirical humour here; but in effect the advice is a part of his recommendation of a system of harassing warfare with large bodies of infantry able to march unencumbered by much baggage or by any heavy artillery, and well armed with breech-loaders carrying about 1000 yards.[1] The concluding words of the memorandum were: "China wants no big officer from foreign powers. I say big officer because I am a big officer in China. If I stayed in China it would be bad for China, because it would vex the American, French, and German governments, who would want to send their officers. Besides, I am not wanted. China can do what I recommend herself. If she cannot I could do no good."

The authorities at the war-office were indulgent to him, and, it must be confessed, they strained their rules to the utmost; but as he did not give any guarantee that he would not take up arms in

[1] This document appears *in extenso* in *The Story of Chinese Gordon* by A. Egmont Hake, and on the advice which it contains the Chinese army was afterwards formed.

China, they were compelled to send a message that his leave had been cancelled. He was on his way home when the intimation reached him at Shanghai, and the leave was then extended to give him time to get back to England by the end of February, 1881.

For some time he had been cherishing the intention of taking the longed-for holiday rest in Syria and Palestine, but he had no sooner reached home than he was caught by some of the moving questions of the hour—the condition of Ireland and the Irish,—the evacuation of Candahar. To Ireland he went on a visit, and came to his own conclusions on the subject of the troubles, but he had already been devoting his attention to a proposal on the part of the King of the Belgians to organize an international expedition to the Congo, of which his majesty desired that he should take the command. The scheme was not then matured, and Gordon, after a brief holiday at Lausanne, accepted an offer to proceed to Mauritius as commanding royal engineer. A good many of his friends were highly pleased that he had undertaken this post, because they regarded it as a method of reserving him, as it were, in case some important duty should demand a man of unusual qualifications, energy, and resource. Just before taking this appointment Gordon had received intelligence of the death of Gessi in the French hospital at Suez; and the news was a blow to him, for he knew that his work in the Soudan would now be undone. On his way out Gordon stayed at Suez to visit the grave of his brave lieutenant and faithful follower.

At Mauritius the work was somewhat irksome because of official routine, but the ten months passed there brought in reality something like the needed rest, and as much leisure as Gordon would have been likely to take. It was a quiet, peaceable, and by no means an unhappy time, during which he was greatly interested in those marvellous islands the Seychelles, made some curious speculative researches as to the geographical position of the Garden of Eden, and as a more professional occupation planned and put forward some very excellent schemes for the defence of the Indian Ocean. While thus occupied, in March, 1882, he was raised to the rank of major-general, and at about the same time, or

earlier, a request had reached him from the Cape government to assist in terminating the war in Basutoland.

Gordon had offered his services a year before—that is to say, while he was taking his brief holiday at Lausanne in the spring of 1881 he had received an intimation from the government of the Cape of Good Hope offering him the command of the Colonial forces at a salary of £1500 a year. But he was not inclined to undertake military service merely, as he believed that the condition of affairs in Basutoland would offer a field for his talent in mediation and the removal of the causes of hostilities; he had, therefore, telegraphed to the premier of the Cape government, "Chinese Gordon offers his services for two years at £700 a year to assist in terminating war and administering Basutoland." This overture was not accepted, but a year later, affairs in Basutoland having become serious and another Colonial government having come into authority, it was thought to be of the utmost importance to secure the services of some one of proved ability, firmness, and energy; and on the 23d of February, 1882, Sir Hercules Robinson telegraphed to the Earl of Kimberley to inquire whether Colonel Gordon, R.E., C.B., would be permitted to go out to the Cape for the purpose of consulting with ministers as to the best measures to be adopted with reference to Basutoland, and should he be prepared to renew the offer made to their predecessors. Leave was immediately granted by the war-office, and the premier of the Cape then telegraphed to Gordon asking him if he was disposed to renew the offer which he made to the former ministry in April of the previous year. They did not expect him to be bound by the salary then stated, and urged him, should he agree, to go out at once in order to learn the facts, the knowledge of which would be requisite for him to render them advice and assistance. By so doing, they said, he would confer a signal favour on the colony, leaving his future action unimpeded. This seemed to be plain enough. Gordon had refused the mere command of the forces, but had offered to assist in terminating the war and administering the country. That was the offer which the Colonial government had now accepted if he could be induced to repeat it, and, in

compliance with the urgent request contained in their telegram, he started immediately, and reached the Cape in May. This is not the place in which to enter into an account of Gordon's experiences under a government which appears to have acted in the spirit of the lower type of parochialism, and to have treated him much as a pompous board of guardians might treat a minor parish official if they had first asked his advice and then found that it was opposed to some local personal interest which they had not the courage to disturb. He had no sooner arrived there than he found that ministers were apparently under the fear of Mr. Orpen, who was the Administrator of Basutoland, for, though they did not approve of that gentleman's policy, they thought that it was too popular to be immediately traversed.

If Gordon would for a time take the position of commandant-general, which he had previously refused, they would be able to avail themselves by and by of his invaluable counsel and well-known ability and integrity. He was never careful of his own personal claims, and as he was already sufficiently acquainted with the condition of affairs in Basutoland to have arrived at the conclusion that prompt and decisive measures were necessary, and to believe that the policy which was being pursued was not likely to put an end to the hostility of the natives, he consented to remain, in the expectation that he would shortly be permitted to take some part in the work for which he had been summoned. In a very short time he had made investigations which convinced him that the primary mistake had been that of transferring Basutoland from the Imperial to the Colonial government without consulting the Basutos themselves, and he proposed that they should be assembled and permitted to discuss the terms of an agreement with the Colonial governor. No reply was made to his memorandum, nor to subsequent representations on the very matters which he had been sent for to examine and advise upon. He had been requested to examine and report on the Colonial force, and in his reply he showed that by a system of economy—which began by cutting down his own salary one-third—the force of 1600 men might be increased to 8000, and yet £7000 be saved

to the colony. Nothing followed. He was asked to go up country and report on some matters there, and was afterwards told to draw up suggestions of remedies for the evils which he pointed out. He did so; no notice was taken. Possibly he was too earnest and too rapid for the Colonial ministry, or they may have differed entirely from his conclusions; but as they had professed to disagree with the condition of things which he had been sent for that he might improve them, something should have been done. The ministry did nothing except to treat the man, whom they had solicited to hurry to their aid, with an indifference that was unbearable whether it arose from sloth, trepidation, or arrogance.

On the 18th of July the ministry requested him to go to Basutoland. In reply he sent a memorandum containing propositions for a convention. He felt that if he went it was due to himself that he should go prepared with some definite proposal in which he would be sustained by the authority of the government. No answer. He had, however, sent a private note to the premier, saying that it was useless for him to go, unless the government were prepared to acknowledge his presence and take account of his proposals. He heard no more of it, though he afterwards offered to resign his office as commandant-general and to go as resident to the territory of the hostile chief Masupha for two years at a salary of £300 a year, as he believed that in time he should be able to gain the old chief's confidence and restore order to the country. No doubt this proposition seemed too wild and unconventional to require any answer, and by that time it began to be recognized that Gordon was not a likely man to be induced to appear to endorse a policy to which he was entirely opposed. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that he had made the relative position of the government and himself extremely awkward by letting it be known that having proposed a convention, and exposed the provocation and oppression to which the natives were subjected by unjust laws put in force by incompetent and brutal magistrates, he should refuse to lead a force against the Basutos unless improvements were made both in the laws and in the choice of those who administered them.

Little as he cared about personal consequences, he would perhaps scarcely have said this unless he had felt that it would either produce a crisis or preface his resignation. In August, however, the secretary for native affairs, Mr. Sauer, went up to Williamstown and asked Gordon to go with him into Basutoland, where he was to meet Mr. Orpen the ministerial representative. Gordon contended that as he was opposd to Mr. Orpen's policy, and as the government had taken no notice of the convention which he had suggested, he could be of no possible use there. Still Sauer persisted, and Gordon reluctantly consented to accompany him. They reached Basutoland in September, and had an interview with Letsea the chief, who assumed to be an ally of the government and hostile to Masupha. Gordon was more than ever convinced that the policy of encouraging hostility between the tribes was utterly mistaken, and he handed to Mr. Sauer a memorandum to that effect. Mr. Sauer, after having considered the memorandum, asked Gordon if he would go as a private individual to Masupha and see what he could do. It must be remembered that Mr. Sauer was an important official, that he knew what were Gordon's views, and that the government, also knowing them, wished him to accompany the secretary. Gordon was not a man to shrink from such an attempt as Sauer now persuaded him to undertake, even though he had no credentials nor instructions, and his mission was non-official and merely tentative. He went, as usual, unarmed, and as usual impressed the savage chief with his honesty of purpose and the truth of his representations. Had this not been the case Gordon might never have returned alive, for while he was negotiating with Masupha, the emissaries of those who had the management of the policy that was being pursued, had incited Letsea to send his son Lethrodi with a number of men to attack the old chief. It is not desirable to speculate on the possible motives of the immediate instigators of such an act. That Gordon had gone to see Basuto on a mission of peace was known, but that was the moment chosen treacherously to renew hostilities. Doubtless Gordon's expressions of indignation and astonishment were equal to those of the old chief himself, who with a fine instinct

seemed instantly to acquit his visitor of either knowledge of or participation in the base act, and suffered him to depart unmolested. Masupha apparently knew better than the Cape ministry what was due to a gentleman and a brave, upright, and distinguished man. Gordon departed for the nearest station from which he could telegraph his resignation to the under-colonial-secretary at Cape Town. This was on the 26th of September, 1882, and his resignation being accepted he left South Africa only a little more than five months after he had been induced to take office there by the persuasion that he could place at the disposal of the colonial government qualifications which all the world, except that government, had been able to appreciate. It may, of course, be contended that by his experiences and the positions which he had held Gordon had learned to take an attitude which in an officer holding any other than the highest position in a regular government would appear to be somewhat masterful, and his own character and disposition were not favourable to habits of submission or circumlocution. That he was accustomed to advance his own views with much plainness when he thought that occasion called for a personal expression of them is well known, but after allowing for all this the conduct of the Cape government cannot be defended. Had he not been allowed to remain under a misconception of the position he was to occupy he would probably have resigned as promptly as he did when he discovered that he had himself made a mistake in accepting the post of private secretary to Lord Ripon, and his explanation would then have involved nobody but himself, as when people complained on that occasion that he had suppressed his motives for resigning, he said at once that, in such a position with a turbulent spirit like his, he would be likely to do more harm than good, and would only too probably hamper the viceroy, and involve him in difficulties.

It must have been with a sense of relief, not unmingled with a certain feeling of disdain, that Gordon left the Cape. His experiences there had apparently tended to increase his reserve, but had not embittered his temper. He had learned not to fear and not

to care much what man could do to him, and he had very little regard for the opinions of the Cape high officials, who had received his resignation with a certain pompous alacrity, which vainly attempted to imply a snub, as it was defeated by the calm imperturbable brevity of Gordon's last note. Now he wanted to be alone, or, at all events, to seize, while he could, the opportunity for a time of seclusion; and soon after his return to England he went to Palestine and settled outside Jerusalem. There he lived chiefly on bread and fruits, reserving tobacco, in the form of cigarettes, for special occasions, and devoted the greater part of his pay to the relief of the poor and distressed. Most of his time was devoted to researeh in subjects which interested him deeply. It was with an eagerness that was almost a passion that he pursued the survey of the Holy Sepulchre, the Tabernacle, and the walls of Jerusalem. He had taken the holy sites in hand, to prove them not the holy sites at all, greatly to the horror and scandal of clerical tourists. But he was no mere iconoclast; he worked as one seeing sermons in stones and good in everything—with the faith of a Christian, but the eye and brain of an engineer. The Bible was his guide, and he did not care for sites if he had a map. "In reality," he said, "no man, in writing on these sites, ought to draw on his imagination; he ought to keep to the simple facts, and not prophesy or fill up gaps." Among the subjects in which he took the deepest interest was the proposed Jordan Canal, and he went thoroughly into the details of that great scheme.[1] He was resting, and at peace, but his was not a nature to remain long satisfied with occupations which may be said to have been chosen for his own gratification. His activity would soon seek a wider scope. He had continued to keep up his acquaintance with public affairs, and was noting events with an interest as keen as ever. It was scarcely likely that he would remain long without some application being made to him to undertake important work, and the scheme for a mission with Stanley on the Congo was in the future—in the immediate future, as it turned out; for, while he was planning how he would return and resume, at the east end of London, the

[1] A. Egmont Hake: *Story of Chinese Gordon.*

work among the poor which he had formerly carried on at Gravesend, he had letters from the King of the Belgians reminding him of the scheme for administering certain territory on the Congo and establishing an anti-slavery mission in memory of the dead son of the sovereign, who had obtained his promise to take the control if the assent of his government and of the other powers were secured.

It took a very short time for Gordon to prepare for leaving Palestine. He sailed from Jaffa by the first ship, a battered merchantman that was nearly wrecked on the voyage, and was very soon at Brussels, where the final arrangements for the Congo enterprise were rapidly completed, the plans discussed, and full instructions and authority placed in his hands. It has been significantly said, that but for the excitement of popular feeling by the publication of the opinions expressed by General Gordon to the representative of a newspaper, and the strong opinion in favour of his being sent out to the Soudan by the government, he would probably have been discussing the programme of the Belgian mission with Mr. Stanley on the banks of the Congo, instead of finding himself beleaguered in Khartûm; but neither the newspaper editors nor the public, whose enthusiasm was aroused, were aware that the government had made overtures to secure his services some time before, when he might have achieved prompt and complete success in the undertaking for which he was required, but that Gordon himself was reluctant to accept the appointment, and the Egyptian ministry were absolutely opposed to the results which it was mainly intended to accomplish. Gordon had desired to induce Sir Samuel Baker to undertake the duty, and as late as the 12th of January had written to him a letter in which he had given a general view of the situation, from which it was evident that he regarded the intervention of Turkish troops as desirable if not inevitable. He said:—"If the sultan allows the Mahdi to be head of the government, he virtually abdicates all authority over the Hedjaz, Syria, Palestine; therefore if we prevent his action, or refuse propositions such as I have made, we virtually upset the sultan in the countries

I have named. I take it for granted that you will go; and I would recommend, (1) permission to be got from the sultan to engage 4000 of his reserve troops, both officers and men, which will be under your brother's command, and be volunteers with a promise of remuneration at end of their services; (2) that some 2000 Beloochees under the native officers should be enlisted in India, who have been soldiers of her Majesty, old sturdy warriors; for your cavalry, you can horse them in Hedjaz, Palestine, and Syria; (3) that her Majesty's government will allow you to purchase from her Majesty animals, paying a percentage on all purchases; (4) that her Majesty's government should allow military store officers to aid you, but not to go into the field."

We have already seen what was the course of events at Suakim and in the Eastern Soudan up to a date beyond that at which Gordon arrived in Khartûm, and we may now glance at the situation of the latter place at the beginning of 1884 previous to his arrival in the southern provinces. The only Englishman at Khartûm, except Colonel Coetlogon, who was of course in the Egyptian service, was Mr. Power, the special correspondent of the *Times*, and in December, 1883, Sir E. Baring telegraphed to Earl Granville asking permission to employ this gentleman as temporary consular agent, that there might be somebody to send information of what was going on from time to time. This proposal was approved by the foreign minister, and from that time until the arrival of Gordon, and afterwards, Mr. Power occupied an official position, apparently without discontinuing to represent the *Times*. There had ceased to be any hope that even a remnant of the army of Hicks Pasha had escaped, and later reports (at the end of January, 1884) seemed to give even a more sinister aspect to the supposed causes of his immediate defeat. A Greek merchant who escaped from Obeid and arrived at Khartûm declared that he was present at the battle, and affirmed that from the time General Hicks left Duem large bodies of Arabs camped each night on the place or "seriba" occupied by General Hicks the night before. He frequently wished to turn and disperse these men, but Alladeen Pasha assured him that they

were friends following to back up the Egyptian army. On the sixth or seventh day General Hicks sent back a small body; they were fired upon by the Arabs; and then General Hicks again insisted that these men should be dispersed. Alladeen refused, and General Hicks then drew his sword and threw it on the ground, saying that he resigned, and would no longer be responsible if the governor-general did not permit his orders to be obeyed. General Hicks said that from the time he left Duem Alladeen caused his orders to be disobeyed. After some time he was persuaded to resume the command; but things went on as before, the body of Arabs in rear always growing larger. After some small engagements Kashgil was reached. Here an ambuscade had been formed for days, and the guide told to lead the army thither. When the Arabs opened fire from behind rocks and trees they were wholly concealed, and the guns in position could fire with impunity. The shells and bullets of the Egyptians were harmless, so thick were the rocks and trees. General Hicks wheeled his army to gain the open, but found the defile blocked by Alladeen's so-called friends the Arabs, who had been following him for days. These had got into cover and opened fire on the army. The Arabs from behind their cover kept up a fire for three days, and in the whole affair lost no more than from 270 to 300 men. The Egyptian soldiers were then lying on the ground dying or in convulsions from thirst, and the Arabs found them in groups of twenty or so unable to rise. They were all speared on the ground. General Hicks's staff and escort had water, and were in a group on horseback. When the Arabs came out of cover General Hicks charged, leading his staff and shooting down all the rebels in his way. They galloped past towards a sheikh supposed by the Egyptians to be the Mahdi. General Hicks rushed on him with his sword and cut his face and arm; the man had on a Darfûr steel mail-shirt. Just then a club thrown struck General Hicks on the head, and unhorsed him; the horses of the staff were speared, but the officers fought on foot till all were killed. General Hicks was the last to die. The Mahdi was not in the battle, but came to see General Hicks's body. As each

sheikh passed he pierced it with his lance, an Arab custom, that he might say he assisted in his death.

The report added that the Mahdi had a large standing army of 35,000 paid men, and could obtain 30,000 in three days when he called for them.

At the end of November, 1883, it was not easy to say whether there was any security against the rebellion anywhere above Assouan, Siout, or Minieh. The remains of the Egyptian troops were to be concentrated at Khartûm, where Colonel Coetlogon had arrived with the movable column employed in clearing the White Nile bank as far as Duem. He calculated that when he had collected his whole force within the place the total of the available troops would be not more than 4000, in the only spot where Egyptian authority was likely to keep any footing, and where the success at El Obeid was already causing so much disaffection among the populace that the colonel was seriously thinking of attempting a retreat down the river to Berber, whence he thought that he might reach Suakim, although, as was afterwards known, the route from Berber to the sea would probably have been impassable to a body of disheartened troops, harassed at every step by a horde of enemies already exulting over the news of a victory over the army which had been annihilated at Kashgil on the 5th of November. The opinion of the military authorities at Cairo as represented by General Stephenson, Sir Evelyn Wood, and General Baker, who met to discuss the subject officially, was that the Egyptian government would find it impossible to hold the Soudan with the force at their disposal, and that it would be eventually necessary, after withdrawing the garrisons, to fall back from Khartûm to Egypt proper; but that Khartûm should, if possible, be held long enough to allow the more advanced posts and detached garrisons in the Soudan to rejoin, while the Egyptian government should try to render as much support as possible from Suakim. We have seen, however, that aid from Suakim became impracticable, because of the extension of the insurrection to the Eastern Soudan, and the disasters which occurred there. Had it been practicable to keep open the route between Suakim and Berber, or had the

railway, which had been talked about so long before, been completed between these two points, the conditions might have been very different; but as it turned out, everything tended towards the isolation of Khartûm, which alone was not worth preserving even if its preservation had been possible, with the whole of the surrounding provinces in arms and their chiefs so far committed to the revolt that they were determined to stand the hazard.

On the 25th of November Colonel Coetlogon telegraphed to Sir Evelyn Wood, "Khartûm and Sennâr cannot be held in two months' time. There will be no food. All supplies are cut off to save what remains of the army of the Soudan. A retreat on Berber should be made at once, and by a combined movement from Berber and Suakim that route should be opened. Reinforcements arriving could not reach Khartûm except by land, and for that a very large force is necessary, and no supplies for them if they did arrive. The river roûte cannot be relied upon, as it can be stopped any day where mountains overhang the river, which at that point is narrow and shallow. We have only two steamers that could do towing work. Both are small, of no power, and old. To carry a force by river would be very difficult in a month's time even if unattacked. The troops that are left are the refuse of the army, mostly old and blind. Again I say the only way of saving what remains is to attempt a general retreat on Berber. This is the real state of affairs here, and I beg of you to impress it on his highness the khedive."

At this very time, or at least the next day, two telegrams were sent to Earl Granville from Sir E. Baring, who had succeeded Sir E. Malet as governor-general at Cairo: one was to assure his lordship that the Egyptian government fully understood that the whole responsibility of any operations in the Soudan must rest on them, and that they must rely wholly on their own resources; and the other that intelligence from Suakim had arrived, that fears were entertained for the garrisons of Tokar and Sinkat, as the troops refused to go to their relief. There was small hope, therefore, of organizing a movement towards Berber with Egyptian troops, and the army of Sir Evelyn Wood had been, as we have

seen, enlisted under the distinct promise to the recruits that they should not be called upon to serve in the Soudan.

It would appear that the whole disaster in the Soudan may be attributed to the determination of the Egyptian government to send Hicks Pasha to operate in Kordofan. Sir Samuel Baker had advocated the White Nile being made the boundary of Egypt's authority. As early as April, 1883, the Earl of Dufferin had told the Egyptian minister for the Soudan that the disturbances which had then taken place were mainly to be attributed to the misgovernment and cruel exactions of the local Egyptian authorities at Khartûm, and that whatever might be the pretensions of the Mahdi to a divine mission, his chief strength was derived from the despair and misery of the population. Lord Dufferin added that if the Egyptian government were wise it would confine its efforts to the re-establishment of its authority in Sennâr, and would not seek to extend its dominion beyond that province and the bordering river banks. This would have diminished and ultimately put an end to the drain on the Egyptian treasury, and if Dongola, Khartûm, and Sennâr had been endowed with a just and humane administration, the ultimate recovery of so much of the abandoned territories as it might have proved desirable to reannex, might have been easily effected at a later period.

General Hicks had to contend with innumerable difficulties and annoyances, and was frequently thwarted by the jealousies, the apathy, and the incapacity of the local authorities with whom he had to act. His means of transport were also deficient; the steamers placed at his disposal were in an unsatisfactory condition; nor were his troops any of the best, though under his leading they do not seem to have fought badly. Over all these impediments, however, he successfully triumphed, and Lord Dufferin, on the day that he left Egypt, telegraphed to Earl Granville the news of the general's victory at Marabiyeh, which took place on the 29th of April, 1883, and led to the complete re-establishment of the authority of the Egyptian government in Sennâr. Lord Dufferin was distinctly of opinion that had General Hicks's offensive operations terminated here, all would have been

comparatively well. A deep river and a considerable tract of desert separated the liberated territory from the Mahdi's head-quarters, and breathing time had been gained for effecting the defensive operations suggested by Colonel Stewart, and for the establishment of a just and decent administration at Khartûm and Sennâr, as well as for negotiations with some of the disaffected tribes.

On the 29th of December a "black nun," a lay sister of an Austrian convent at Obeid, arrived at Khartûm after twenty-one days' journey. She stated that there was no army or body of soldiers existing in Kordofan, and that the Mahdi was mustering his forces for an advance on Khartûm. She also declared that not one Egyptian soldier escaped massacre, and that the only European prisoner brought in was a Pomeranian Uhlan servant of Major Seckendorf, and that he was well treated by the Mahdi, as also were all the missionaries at Obeid; but that though the Mahdi personally treated the whites well, the tribes generally were bent on their massacre.

The position at Khartûm was evidently dangerous, and it had there been heard that Berber had already been attacked by a body of Bishareen Arabs, who, though they had been repulsed by the Bashi-Bazouks, had probably not retreated to any great distance. As early as December 18th Admiral Sir William Hewett had reported that the road from Suakim to Berber was closed, and that it was probable that an organized army other than Egyptian, to the number of 15,000 men, would be necessary to re-open the country. This was the intelligence conveyed to him by Suleiman Pasha, the governor-general and commander-in-chief of the army at Suakim, who also stated that all supplies would have to be imported for such an army as would be required to fight its way and keep the route open to Berber.

It may be mentioned here that in the first days of December the Egyptian government had proposed to send, and afterwards did send, Zebehr Pasha to Suez. He had raised some black troops, who were sent to Suez, where they were made somewhat reluctantly to embark for service at Suakim. They having shown

signs of mutiny because Zebehr himself was not to command them, he having been recalled to Cairo, they were only overawed and compelled by the Egyptian troops, under the command of Majors Kitchener and Chermside. The Egyptian troops were commanded by English officers, otherwise the black recruits would doubtless have proceeded to open hostilities. On the 9th of December Sir E. Baring wrote to Lord Granville that it had been proposed to send Zebehr, and said:

"Under ordinary circumstances his employment by the Egyptian government would have been open to considerable objection, and I should have thought it my duty to remonstrate against it. Under present circumstances, however, I have not thought it either necessary or desirable to interfere with the discretion of the Egyptian government in this matter. Whatever may be Zebehr Pasha's faults, he is said to be a man of great energy and resolution. The Egyptian government considers that his services may be very useful in commanding the friendly Bedouins who are to be sent to Suakim, and in conducting negotiations with the tribes on the Berber-Suakim route and elsewhere. I may mention that Baker Pasha is anxious to avail himself of Zebehr Pasha's services. Your lordship will, without doubt, bear in mind that up to the present time the whole responsibility for the conduct of the affairs in the Soudan has been left to the Egyptian government. It appeared to me that, under present circumstances, it would not have been just, whilst leaving all the responsibility to the Egyptian government, to have objected to that government using its own discretion on such a point as the employment of Zebehr Pasha. I make these remarks as the employment of Zebehr Pasha may not improbably attract attention in England."

There could be no question that public opinion in England would be excited by the proposal, and subsequently, when the proposition was made by the Egyptian government to send Zebehr to Khartûm, the Anti-slavery Society appealed to Earl Granville against it, quoting the declarations of General Gordon with regard to the influence which Zebehr had exercised in maintaining the slave traffic.

Things were going from bad to worse around Khartûm, and the impression gaining ground that there would be no interposition to save the Soudan to Egypt, it was rumoured that Menelek of Shoa, assisted by the Gallas, would probably seize Harrar, and that the Somalis might turn the Egyptians out of Berbera and Zeila. An engagement had taken place between the rebels and the garrison of Gazeerah on the Atbara, in which the latter succeeded in beating off their assailants, but destroyed the fortified encampment at Gazeerah and made their way to Berber. On the 30th of December, 1883, Mr. Power telegraphed to Sir E. Baring from Khartûm, saying:—

"The European and loyal population are beginning to think that they have been either forgotten or abandoned by the government at Cairo. The state of affairs here is very desperate; we know that twenty-three days ago the Mahdi was assembling a great army to attack us, and to an Arab, Obeid is only an eleven days' march from here. Some do the distance in nine days. What numbers he will bring I cannot say, but we have here, including gunners and sentries, in all but 3000 to hold 4 miles of earthworks, on which are a few old bronze guns and one Krupp field-piece; this number of men would not properly man the walls, and it leaves us without any reserve or relief to move to a threatened place in case of attack. It also forbids us having any guard in the city, which, in case of attack, will be at the mercy of an undisguisedly rebel population. At present we are not strong enough to seize the well-known ringleaders or agents of the Mahdi. This is well known to the government, yet over forty days have elapsed since it heard the news of our situation here, and there are as yet no signs of a relieving column arriving. We have not yet even heard if they have arrived at Assiout, eight hours from Cairo. On the 27th of last month (November) the khedive telegraphed most distinctly that Zobeir Pasha and his Bedouins had left Cairo two days before. He said that Baker was leaving Suez, yet I find that the papers of the 4th instant state that neither one nor the other have left Cairo, and that Zobeir was, before leaving, to raise, arm, and, I suppose, train 1000

negroes. In three days this town may be in the hands of the rebels, yet there has been an attempt made to prevent the Kawah and Duem garrisons from joining us. . . . On Christmas Day Ibrahim Pasha told me that every house in Khartûm had arms in it, and we are not strong enough to have domiciliary visits carried out. Colonel Coetlogon is indefatigable in his efforts to provide that nothing should be left undone for the safety of the town. All the works have been carried out under his personal supervision, and he is continually inspecting the working gangs while at work; he has driven a deep ditch and parapet 1400 metres long across the level space or plain left dry by the subsidence of the river; but for him this broad avenue into the town would have been left open and unprotected, so now the fortification runs from river to river. There is here a small portion of the population, European or otherwise, whose loyalty is undoubted. These men would undoubtedly be ready to defend their property and families here, and act as police to keep the mob in check, in case of attack, but there are no arms to serve out to them, there being but a few hundred rifles in the arsenal, not enough to provide for accidents amongst the soldiers."

Now, on the 1st of December Earl Granville had telegraphed to Sir E. Baring asking whether, if General Gordon were willing to go to Egypt, he would be of any use either to the consul-general or to the Egyptian government, and if so, in what capacity; and the reply received the next day had been:—"The Egyptian government is very much averse to employing General Gordon, mainly on the ground that the movement in the Soudan being religious, the appointment of a Christian in high command would probably alienate the tribes who remain faithful. I think it wise to leave the whole responsibility of Soudan affairs to them, and not to press them on the subject."

On the 9th of January Colonel Coetlogon telegraphed to the khedive strongly urging an immediate withdrawal from Khartûm. One-third of the garrison were unreliable, and if it had been twice as strong it could not have held Khartûm against the whole country, which, without a doubt, was all opposed to

Egyptian government. Preliminary instructions had been given to prepare for a retreat. The Egyptian governor and commander of troops entirely agreed with him.

On the following day Earl Granville asked whether General Gordon or Sir Charles Wilson would be of any assistance under the altered circumstances of a new ministry having been formed at Cairo; but the answer received in a few hours was that it was not thought that the services of either of them could be utilized at present. On the 14th of January Earl Granville telegraphed: "Can you give further information as to prospects of retreat for army and residents at Khartûm, and measures taken?" and on the 16th the answer came:—"With reference to your lordship's telegram of the 14th instant, I hope soon to be able to telegraph fully, as the subject of the withdrawal from Khartûm is now being discussed. There can be no doubt, however, that very great difficulties will be encountered. It was intended to despatch Abd-el-Kader, the new minister of war, to Khartûm; he at first accepted, but now declines to go. The Egyptian government would feel greatly obliged if her Majesty's government would select a well-qualified British officer to go to Khartûm instead of the war minister. He would be given full powers, both civil and military, to conduct the retreat." This, of course, was the same thing as leaving the government here to appoint Gordon at once.

We have already noted what were the instructions to General Gordon contained in a letter from Earl Granville setting forth the objects of his mission. It was first arranged that Gordon should not go to Cairo on his way to Khartûm, as he had no desire to have an audience with the khedive Tewfik, and thought it better in some respects that he should go entirely untrammelled, so that he might not be subjected to any Egyptian official restrictions; but Earl Granville had, on the 19th of January, sent to Sir E. Baring saying:—"I inclose copy of the instructions which I have addressed to Major-general Gordon, who proceeds to-night to Egypt, accompanied by Lieutenant-colonel Stewart, to report to her Majesty's government on the state of affairs in the Soudan. General Gordon will be under your instructions, and will perform such

other duties beyond those specified in my despatch as may be intrusted to him by the Egyptian government through you. He will report to you his arrival in Egypt, but as he is anxious not to go to Cairo I have to request you, if possible, to make arrangements for meeting him at Ismailia, in order to concert with him whether he should proceed direct to Suakim, or go himself or despatch Colonel Stewart to Khartûm *via* the Nile."

It may be noted that Gordon was thus officially to take instructions through the British consul-general at Cairo, who, however, replied that it would be useless for General Gordon and Colonel Stewart to go to Suakim, where General Baker was doing all that could be done with the means at his disposal; but that they should first go to Cairo with Sir Evelyn Wood and General Watson, who would meet them at Port Said, and after discussing matters should proceed to Khartûm. Daily conferences were being held on the subject of the Soudan, and instructions had already been sent by the Egyptian government to Khartûm to commence at once sending to Berber all the civil officials and non-combatants who were desirous of leaving, and for whom transport could be provided. Endeavours were also being made to secure the co-operation of the heads of tribes. Discretion had been left to the garrison of Sennâr either to retire by the Kassala route, or cut its way through to Khartûm. Very few Europeans remained at Khartûm, and the real difficulty was in withdrawing the native civil population who wished to leave, and the garrison, with the wives and children of the soldiers.

General Gordon on his way to Port Said, drew up a memorandum in which he distinctly set down the position of affairs and his own opinions with regard to them as follows:—

"MEMORANDUM BY GENERAL GORDON.

"1. I understand that her Majesty's government have come to the irrevocable decision not to incur the very onerous duty of securing to the peoples of the Soudan a just future government. That, as a consequence, her Majesty's government have determined

to restore to these peoples their independence, and will no longer suffer the Egyptian government to interfere with their affairs.

"2. For this purpose, her Majesty's government have decided to send me to the Soudan to arrange for the evacuation of these countries, and the safe removal of the Egyptian employés and troops.

"3. Keeping paragraph No. 1 in view, viz. that the evacuation of the Soudan is irrevocably decided on, it will depend upon circumstances in what way this is to be accomplished.

"My idea is that the restoration of the country should be made to the different petty sultans who existed at the time of Mehemet Ali's conquest, and whose families still exist; that the Mahdi should be left altogether out of the calculation as regards the handing over the country; and that it should be optional with the sultans to accept his supremacy or not. As these sultans would probably not be likely to gain by accepting the Mahdi as their sovereign, it is probable that they will hold to their independent positions. Thus we should have two factors to deal with—namely, the petty sultans asserting their several independence, and the Mahdi's party aiming at supremacy over them. To hand, therefore, over to the Mahdi the arsenals, &c., would, I consider, be a mistake. They should be handed over to the sultans of the states in which they are placed.

"The most difficult question is how and to whom to hand over the arsenals at Khartûm, Dongola, and Kassala, which towns have, so to say, no old standing families, Khartûm and Kassala having sprung up since Mehemet Ali's conquest. Probably it would be advisable to postpone any decision as to these towns till such time as the inhabitants have made known their opinion.

"4. I have in paragraph 3 proposed the transfer of the lands to the local sultans, and stated my opinion that these will not accept the supremacy of the Mahdi. If this is agreed to and my supposition be correct as to their action, there can be but little doubt that as far as he is able the Mahdi will endeavour to assert his rule over them, and will be opposed to any evacuation of the government employés and troops. My opinion of the Mahdi's

forces is, that the bulk of those who were with him at Obeid will refuse to cross the Nile, and that those who do so will not exceed 3000 or 4000 men, and also that these will be composed principally of black troops who have deserted, and who, if offered fair terms, would come over to the government side. In such a case, viz. 'Sultans accepting transfer of territory and refusing the supremacy of the Mahdi, and Mahdi's black troops coming over to the government,'—resulting weakness of the Mahdi. What should be done should the Mahdi's adherents attack the evacuating columns? It cannot be supposed that these are to offer no resistance, and if in resisting they should obtain a success, it would be but reasonable to allow them to follow up the Mahdi to such a position as would ensure their future safe march. This is one of those difficult questions which our government can hardly be expected to answer, but which may arise, and to which I would call attention. Paragraph 1 fixes irrevocably the decision of the government, viz. to evacuate the territory, and, of course, as far as possible, involves the avoidance of any fighting. I can, therefore, only say that, having in view paragraph 1, and seeing the difficulty of asking her Majesty's government to give a decision or direction as to what should be done in certain cases, that I will carry out the evacuation as far as possible according to their wish to the best of my ability, and with avoidance, as far as possible, of all fighting. I would, however, hope that her Majesty's government will give me their support and consideration should I be unable to fulfil all their expectations.

"5. Though it is out of my province to give any opinion as to the action of her Majesty's government in leaving the Soudan, still I must say it would be an iniquity to reconquer these peoples and then hand them back to the Egyptians without guarantees of future good government. It is evident that this we cannot secure them without an inordinate expenditure of men and money. The Soudan is a useless possession, ever was so, and ever will be so. Larger than Germany, France, and Spain together, and mostly barren, it cannot be governed except by a dictator, who may be good or bad. If bad, he will cause constant revolts. No one who

has ever lived in the Soudan can escape the reflection—'What a useless possession is this land!' Few men also can stand its fearful monotony and deadly climate.

"6. Said Pasha, the viceroy before Ismail, went up to the Soudan with Count F. de Lesseps. He was so discouraged and horrified at the misery of the people that at Berber Count de Lesseps saw him throw his guns into the river, declaring that he would be no party to such oppression. It was only after the urgent solicitations of European consuls and others that he reconsidered his decision. Therefore I think her Majesty's government are fully justified in recommending the evacuation, inasmuch as the sacrifices necessary towards securing a good government would be far too onerous to admit of such an attempt being made. Indeed, one may say it is impracticable at any cost. Her Majesty's government will now leave them as God has placed them; they are not forced to fight among themselves, and they will no longer be oppressed by men coming from lands so remote as Circassia, Kurdistan, and Anatolia.

"7. I have requested Lieut.-colonel Stewart to write his views independent of mine on this subject. I append them to this report."

This was dated Steam Ship *Tanjore* at sea, January 22, 1884, and the following "observations" by Colonel Stewart accompanied it:—

"1. I have carefully read over General Gordon's observations, and cordially agree with what he states.

"2. I would, however, suggest that, as far as possible, all munitions of war be destroyed on evacuation.

"3. I quite agree with General Gordon that the Soudan is an expensive and useless possession. No one who has visited it can escape the reflection: 'What a useless possession is this land, and what a huge encumbrance on Egypt!'

"4. Handing back the territories to the families of the dispossessed sultans is an act of justice both towards them and their people. The latter, at any rate, will no longer be at the mercy of foreign mercenaries, and if they are tyrannized over, it will be more

or less their own fault. Handing back the districts to the old reigning families is also a politic act, as raising up a rival power to that of the Mahdi.

"5. As it is impossible for her Majesty's government to foresee all the eventualities that may arise during the evacuation, it seems to me as the more judicious course to rely on the discretion of General Gordon and his knowledge of the country.

"6. I, of course, understand that General Gordon is going to the Soudan with full powers to make all arrangements as to its evacuation, and that he is in no way to be interfered with by the Cairo ministers. Also that any suggestions or remarks that the Cairo government would wish to make are to be made directly to him and her Majesty's minister plenipotentiary, and that no intrigues are to be permitted against his authority. Any other course would, I am persuaded, make his mission a failure.

"(Signed) D. H. STEWART,

"*Lieutenant-Colonel, 11th Hussars.*"

"I have received my orders," General Gordon had said just before leaving London. These orders, which were sent him from the foreign office on the 18th of January, were:—

"Her Majesty's government are desirous that you should proceed at once to Egypt, to report to them on the military situation in the Soudan, and on the measures which it may be advisable to take for the security of the Egyptian garrisons still holding positions in that country, and for the safety of the European population in Khartûm.

You are also desired to consider and report upon the best mode of effecting the evacuation of the interior of the Soudan, and upon the manner in which the safety and the good administration by the Egyptian government of the ports on the sea-coast can best be secured.

In connection with this subject, you should pay especial consideration to the question of the steps that may usefully be taken to counteract the stimulus which it is feared may possibly be given to the slave-trade by the present insurrectionary move-

ment and by the withdrawal of the Egyptian authority from the interior.

You will be under the instructions of her Majesty's agent and consul-general at Cairo, through whom your reports to her Majesty's government should be sent, under flying seal.

You will consider yourself authorized and instructed to perform such other duties as the Egyptian government may desire to intrust to you, and as may be communicated to you by Sir E. Baring. You will be accompanied by Colonel Stewart, who will assist you in the duties thus confided to you.

On your arrival in Egypt you will at once communicate with Sir E. Baring, who will arrange to meet you, and will settle with you whether you should proceed direct to Suakim, or should go yourself or despatch Colonel Stewart to Khartûm *via* the Nile."

Orders not very easy to interpret in any case where prompt and active measures might be necessary. The sending of reports, and awaiting instructions and replies from the consul-general at Cairo, who himself might have to wait for answers to his telegrams to the foreign office in London, did not leave much margin for exercising necessary and immediate action for the purpose of evacuating a beleaguered town already almost hopelessly environed, and for effecting the task of bringing the people and the garrison through a hostile country, or embarking them for the Nile journey in boats, more of which had yet to be provided. It may be conceded that all such instructions given by a government comparatively ignorant of the obstacles that may be in the way of carrying out their instructions, and with little knowledge of the vicissitudes that must accompany the endeavour to achieve the desired results, are mostly so vague and guarded as to paralyse active efforts, if the words are taken in their literal significance. The interpretation of them makes all the difference; and the man who does nothing rather than seem to exceed his authority may well retire behind the official sentences, while the earnest man may accept them with his own translation of their meaning, and should he succeed may rise to great reputation and reward, while, should he fail, the government may be screened by the same

sentences, and he may be severely reprimanded, and be thereafter spoken of as rash and self-willed for not having observed the terms of the mission with which he had been intrusted.

We have seen, however, what construction Gordon put upon the terms of his instructions, and that interpretation contained in the memorandum which he wrote immediately after he had embarked on his journey across the Mediterranean had been sent to the foreign office, when he awaited further consultations at Cairo.

The instructions he had received were sufficient as to quantity, but they contained only uncertain references to what proved to be the actual situation. Gordon himself had evidently not calculated on the rapidity with which the insurrection spread, and by the very terms of his orders it was necessary to wait for fresh directions at a time when a delay of a day or two might change the merely probable into the inevitable. In other words, at the time that Gordon undertook the mission the work that he had gone to do could only be effected by quite different methods to those which he had at first considered applicable, and it had also become necessary that anyone undertaking it should be really and not only nominally Governor-general of the Soudan provinces and with unquestioned authority. The shadow of support from England misled and confused the whole policy which Gordon might have adopted. The necessity for relinquishing each proposition that he made in deference to the policy which had been declared by the British government in relation to Egypt left him at last without resources, especially as at a critical time the despatches sent to Khartûm were intercepted, and the messages sent to and from the place never reached him or the consul-general at Cairo; and Gordon's bitter complaints that he was to be abandoned were made while the government was without trustworthy information, and while the ministry, reluctant to move a finger in contradiction of their former refusal not to interfere in the Soudan, were, too late, preparing to send an expedition for his rescue.

When Gordon reached Cairo on his outward journey, though he seemed to have no great expectation of being able to fulfil

his mission without some fighting, he was sanguine of ultimate success. Some further instructions from Sir E. Baring were given him after his arrival at Cairo, and Gordon then concurred in the policy of abandoning the Soudan, and suggested the addition to the instructions the words, "That it should on no account be changed." These instructions, after referring to those already given by Lord Granville, said:—

"I have now to indicate to you the views of the Egyptian government on two of the points to which your special attention was directed by Lord Granville. These are: (1) The measures which it may be advisable to take for the security of the Egyptian garrisons still holding positions in the Soudan, and for the safety of the European population in Khartûm. (2) The best mode of effecting the evacuation of the interior of the Soudan.

These two points are intimately connected, and may conveniently be considered together.

It is believed that the number of Europeans at Khartûm is very small, but it has been estimated by the local authorities that some 10,000 to 15,000 people will wish to move northwards from Khartûm only when the Egyptian garrison is withdrawn. These people are native Christians, Egyptian employés, their wives and children, &c. The government of his highness the khedive is earnestly solicitous that no effort should be spared to ensure the retreat both of these people and of the Egyptian garrison without loss of life.

As regards the most opportune time and the best method for effecting the retreat, whether of the garrisons or of the civil populations, it is neither necessary nor desirable that you should receive detailed instructions.

A short time ago the local authorities pressed strongly on the Egyptian government the necessity for giving orders for an immediate retreat. Orders were accordingly given to commence at once the withdrawal of the civil population. No sooner, however, had these orders been issued than a telegram was received from the Soudan, strongly urging that the orders for commencing the retreat immediately should be delayed. Under these circum-

stances, and in view of the fact that the position at Khartûm is now represented as being less critical, for the moment, than it was a short time ago, it was thought desirable to modify the orders for the immediate retreat of the civil population, and to await your arrival.

You will bear in mind that the main end to be pursued is the evacuation of the Soudan. This policy was adopted, after very full discussion, by the Egyptian government, on the advice of her Majesty's government. It meets with the full approval of his highness the khedive, and of the present Egyptian ministry. I understand, also, that you entirely concur in the desirability of adopting this policy, and that you think it should on no account be changed. You consider that it may take a few months to carry it out with safety. You are further of opinion that 'the restoration of the country should be made to the different petty sultans who existed at the time of Mohammed Ali's conquest, and whose families still exist;' and that an endeavour should be made to form a confederation of those sultans. In this view the Egyptian government entirely concur. It will, of course, be fully understood that the Egyptian troops are not to be kept in the Soudan merely with a view to consolidating the power of the new rulers of the country. But the Egyptian government has the fullest confidence in your judgment, your knowledge of the country, and of your comprehension of the general line of policy to be pursued. You are therefore given full discretionary power to retain the troops for such reasonable period as you may think necessary, in order that the abandonment of the country may be accomplished with the least possible risk to life and property.

A credit of £100,000 has been opened for you at the finance department, and further funds will be supplied to you on your requisition when this sum is exhausted. In undertaking the difficult task which now lies before you, you may feel assured that no effort will be wanting on the part of the Cairo authorities, whether English or Egyptians, to afford you all the co-operation and support in their power."

These instructions following Gordon's own memorandum obviously change his position from that of being only an adviser who

is to report what course he considers to be best to follow, to that of an active agent intrusted with considerable authority, and expected to carry out the plan which he had proposed to the best of his ability under the conditions mentioned. Earl Granville had already authorized Sir E. Malet to consult with Gordon and to give any further instructions that might be founded on a better knowledge of the country than the English government possessed, and this very considerable alteration in the instructions purported to have been made by the adoption of the views of the Egyptian government. The khedive and his advisers were even then prepared to go a great deal further still; but only under the impression that they were in accord with the views of the British government, an impression which was afterwards confirmed by the virtual endorsement of Lord Granville in the name of the ministry.

Gordon had been met at Port Said on the 24th of January by Sir Evelyn Wood. They had been subalterns together in the Crimea, and now here they were, after nearly thirty years, grasping hands and united in the work of delivering Egypt from internal anarchy and external insurrection. That Gordon Pasha, the ex-governor-general of the Soudan, had come to deliver the country from the Mahdi, was soon repeated by the more loyal Arabs with a kind of exultation; and the assurance of the khedive and the Egyptian ministry in the practical ability and immense influence of Gordon was not less than that of the natives who had served with him and called him the just pasha. The great question was, whether he had come too late.

There was no further delay at Cairo. The two days spent there were only just sufficient for the necessary conferences with the khedive, the ministers, and the consul-general, and almost before they had ended, the khedive, at Gordon's own request, gave him a firman appointing him Governor-general of the Soudan with full powers, civil and military. Sir E. Baring in reporting this to Earl Granville said, "Under the circumstances it was very necessary that this step should be taken." Surely this was the beginning of confusion and misconception; for, if Gordon was the plenipotentiary of the khedive, and England was not to interfere

in affairs of the Soudan, the English government had no longer the authority to control the governor-general appointed to rule over those provinces, even though his mission was to endeavour to carry out the policy for securing which the British ministry had insisted on the resignation of a former Egyptian government. From that moment the whole scheme, undertaken too late, became contradictory, and the mischief remained to the bitter end.

It is true that in his original instructions Gordon found, "You will consider yourself authorized and instructed to perform such other duties as the Egyptian government may desire to intrust to you," but then followed, "and as may be communicated to you by Sir E. Baring." It is difficult to see how the Governor-general of the Soudan, appointed by the khedive and representing the authority of the Egyptian government, was to wait for all his instructions through the British consul-general at Cairo, unless it was to be understood that Britain became responsible for the government of Egypt in the Soudan, and for practically carrying out the operations which had been insisted on even though it might be necessary to revert to active interference and military intervention.

We were about to interfere either a great deal too much or not nearly enough. The khedive in a letter to Gordon respecting his appointment, dated the 26th of January, said:

"Excellency,—You are aware that the object of your arrival here and of your mission to the Soudan is to carry into execution the evacuation of those territories, and to withdraw our troops, civil officials, and such of the inhabitants together with their belongings as may wish to leave for Egypt. We trust that your excellency will adopt the most effective measures for the accomplishment of your mission in this respect, and that after completing the evacuation you will take the necessary steps for establishing an organized government in the different provinces of the Soudan, for the maintenance of order and the cessation of all disasters and incitement to revolt. We have full confidence in your tried abilities and tact, and are convinced that you will accomplish your mission according to our desire."

It is said that the khedive in conversation with the Baron de Malortie on January 29th remarked: "I could not give a better proof of my intention than by accepting Gordon as governor-general with full powers to take whatever step he may judge best for obtaining the end my government and her Majesty's government have in view. I could not do more than delegate to Gordon my own power and make him irresponsible arbiter of the situation. Whatever he does will be well done, whatever arrangements he will make are accepted in advance, whatever combination he may decide upon will be binding for us; and in thus placing unlimited trust in the pasha's judgment I have only made one condition, *that he should provide for the safety of the Europeans and the Egyptian civilian element.* He is now the supreme master, and my best wishes accompany him on a mission of such gravity and importance, for *my heart aches at the thought of the thousands of loyal adherents whom a false step may doom to destruction.* I have no doubt that Gordon Pasha will do his best to sacrifice as few as possible; and, should he succeed, with God's help, in accomplishing the evacuation of Khartûm and the chief ports in the Eastern Soudan, he will be entitled to the everlasting gratitude of my people, who at present tremble that help may come too late. To tell you that he will succeed is more than I or any mortal could prognosticate, for there are tremendous odds against him. But let us hope for the best, and, as far as I and my government are concerned, he shall find the most loyal and most energetic support."

It has been mentioned that Abd-el-Kader, who had been commander at Khartûm when Hicks Pasha reached it, and who was recalled on the appointment of Alladeen, or Ali-ed-Din, was now minister for war at Cairo. He had been requested to go to Khartûm, and some preliminary preparations had been made for his conducting the evacuation of the province; but he probably saw that the task would be beyond his capability, or would be too difficult and dangerous for him to undertake it. At all events, he declined to go.

Before the khedive had held the conversation with Baron de

Malortie Gordon had started on the journey. He had risen early on the morning of the 26th and called on the khedive, by whom he was most cordially received, as he was also by Nubar Pasha. He then went with Sir Evelyn Wood, Colonel Stewart, and Major Watson to have a long conference with Sir E. Baring on the whole situation in the Soudan. On the 26th he set out.

"Everything has gone most satisfactorily with Gordon. He leaves in good spirits," wrote Sir E. Baring to Earl Granville at 4·55 P.M. on the 26th of January; and on the 1st of February, by which time Gordon had reached Assouan, Sir E. Baring wrote:—"Gordon's suggestions have been followed in every particular. Although under my instructions, he has, as a matter of fact, been left the widest discretionary power. His visit to Cairo was most useful, as it will enable the authorities here to help him much more than would otherwise have been possible. There is no sort of difference between his views and those entertained by Nubar Pasha and myself."

Before Gordon left Cairo he desired to be confronted with Zebehr. The story of this man's doings, his influence, and the fate which overtook his son, who had been instigated to rebellion while Gordon and Gessi were endeavouring to suppress the raids of the slave-hunters, has been told in previous pages. Zebehr had left the Bahr Gazelle and taken his wealth and his complaints to Cairo, where the official pashas had contrived to pocket a considerable proportion of the former, amounting to many hundreds of thousands of pounds, while promising to gain the ear of the government to his alleged grievances. In Cairo, however, he was detained as a kind of prisoner under surveillance. The private papers which Gordon and Gessi had found supplied evidence which established Zebehr's guilt; but the result had been that he went unpunished, except in being detained at Cairo with a pension,[1] and judging from his subsequent assumption it seemed possible that the papers which condemned him had either been given up to him or destroyed.

That Zebehr entertained deep resentment against General Gordon may easily be believed, for Gordon had punished with

[1] Vol. i. p. 214.

death the treachery of the pasha's son and the slave-hunting chiefs who were his associates,[1] and had, of course, confiscated the property of the rebellious chief in the Soudan. Gordon was quite aware that there was enmity against him in the heart of "the black pasha," probably a "blood feud," because of the slaying of Zebehr's son; but, as we know, he had long entertained the belief that only native rulers could successfully govern the Soudan provinces under any conditions that would be likely to prevail, and he had already turned his thoughts to the probable results of reinstating Zebehr in a position of authority, with a fair salary and under direct responsibility to the Egyptian and indirectly to the British government. If enough control could be maintained over the once powerful pasha to forbid his re-embarking in slave-raiding expeditions or permitting his associates to resume their iniquitous oppressions for the sake of gain, Zebehr would, he thought, be the man to be received with confidence by the tribes and to "smash up the Mahdi." It was apparently for the purpose of discovering what were the grounds of complaint which Zebehr had against him, and, therefore, how far it might be possible to induce the former pasha to co-operate with him, that Gordon sought for an interview or conference to be held at the British embassy in the presence of Sir Evelyn Baring, Nubar Pasha, Sir Evelyn Wood, Colonel Stewart, Colonel Watson, and Giegler Pasha, Mr. Aranghi acting as interpreter. There had been a good deal of conversation between Sir E. Baring and Gordon as to the manner in which Zebehr should be treated, and Gordon had told the British consul-general that, considering Zebehr's great influence in the Soudan, circumstances might arise which would render it desirable that he should be sent back there; but Sir Evelyn Baring said in his report to Earl Granville, "It would certainly not be desirable to send him there now, for he is manifestly animated by a feeling of deep resentment against General Gordon." This statement was borne out by the fact that, at Gordon's suggestion, Sir Evelyn informed Zebehr that he would be allowed to remain in Cairo, and that the future treatment he would receive at the hands of the Egyptian

[1] Vol. i. pp. 192–211.

government depended in a great measure upon whether General Gordon returned alive and well from the Soudan, and upon whether, whilst residing at Cairo, Zebehr Pasha used his influence to facilitate the execution of the policy adopted by the government.

It would appear, therefore, that Gordon desired to confront Zebehr before witnesses representing the government, in order that the pasha should make any complaints against him and state the reasons for hostile feelings. It might be a preliminary step for removing such obstacles as would prevent Zebehr from acting with measurable loyalty towards him should he eventually seek to reinstall the ex-pasha in a position of authority at Khartûm.

The scene which took place at the conference was very remarkable. The British consul with judicial air; the seriously attentive Egyptian minister, Nubar, watchful, as being not certain of his ground, but probably quite aware that Zebehr was by no means deficient in the native accomplishment of unscrupulous and almost illimitable lying, and that he would certainly exercise it on the occasion; the British officers, less gorgeous than the pashas, among whom Zebehr himself was a picturesque figure as to costume, with his shining yet shadowy, sinister, thin, scowling face, the black skin drawn about the temples and above the close bushy eyebrows, the short thick moustache beneath the fleshy yet pointed nose, and above the protruding somewhat sensuous mouth, the under lip of which hung and protruded in the excitement of waiting to listen to the questions put to him. A marvellous contrast to the somewhat slight and small, yet well-knit figure of the plainly dressed, fair-skinned man, who was there to learn what accusations would be brought against him; the man of fair complexion, honest outlooking blue eyes, at once searching and dreamy, as of one who saw, as it were, two worlds at once—of fearless, somewhat abrupt, but friendly and not ungentle speech and bearing. Gordon's was a presence which seldom failed strongly to impress anyone who met him and spoke to him. A Swedish traveller, who was passing through the Soudan while the English pasha was governor-general, gave in a few words a graphic description of him, which well illustrates much that we now know of his peculiar influence:—

"After passing through the courtyard, filled with soldiers, I came first into a little room, where two clerks were at their desks. Through this I was led into a large square room with windows on two sides and very little furniture, as is generally the case in Egyptian work-rooms. A divan ran round three of the walls. The room was almost filled by officials, merchants, priests, and officers, who were waiting to talk to Gordon, while black servants, offering coffee and cigarettes, made their way through this crowd of visitors. In the midst of the room, at a large square table, sat a man dressed in black. His back was turned to the window and his right arm rested on the table.

"That was Gordon. What did he look like? From what I had heard of him I imagined him to be the type of a true Briton —tall and large-limbed, bearded, and of strong sharp features, who, by a look, a gesture, could control his savage or half-savage surroundings. But he was not that, by any means.

"A short, slender man with a fine, pale, almost beardless face, whose thoughtful, far-away, almost dreaming, but nevertheless energetic look, gave his whole being a striking expression of seriousness. He was like a scholar, who, in his lonely study, conceives and works up a new and grand idea. He offered me a chair, and after refreshments had been offered to me, he asked me about my journey.

"His voice was soft and low. He spoke in short, abrupt sentences, was cool and distant, and while speaking looked at me with steady questioning eyes. It was as if he tried to read in my face whether he might trust me or not. I had hoped that he would take some interest in my travels, but I was disappointed. Gordon's is a remarkable nature of steady individuality. . . . Gordon is one of the great men of our time, who are greater than they are esteemed. Our interview was short. Gordon remained reserved, almost cold, and yet it seemed as if kindness lay hidden under the reserve. I met him several times afterwards, and each time he appeared to become more friendly."

But to return to the meeting assembled at the British Agency.

The usual courtesies having been exchanged, Gordon Pasha desired Zebehr Pasha to make any complaints against him which he might wish to make now in the presence of Sir E. Baring and Nubar Pasha, and added that his statements would be written down.

*Zebehr Pasha.* I want to know why my property in the Soudan was confiscated?

*Gordon.* Because you wrote a letter to your son, Suleiman, inciting him to revolt.

*Zebehr.* Produce the letter, and then I will speak.

*Gordon.* It was produced at the court-martial. The khedive has the letter.

*Zebehr.* When you went as governor-general to the Soudan, I solemnly intrusted my son Suleiman to you, and told you he was thenceforth your son. He was only sixteen years of age.

*Gordon.* The question at present is about the letter. Do you deny its existence?

*Zebehr.* I wrote to my son, but in the letter I did not incite him to rebel.

*Gordon.* Well, I say that you did incite him.

*Zebehr.* Then, if such a letter exists, what you did was right. Produce the letter.

*Gordon.* The court-martial condemned Suleiman to death; they had your letter before them.

*Zebehr.* Who was the president of that court?

*Gordon.* Hasan Pasha Hilmi.

*Zebehr.* And who was over him?

*Gordon.* I was.

*Zebehr.* Produce the letter. Where is it? If such a letter existed, I ought to have been myself brought before a court-martial, and also condemned to death.

*Gordon.* That letter was given to the present khedive, and was kept with the proceedings of the court.

*Zebehr.* You are the subject of a great and just nation; there is no nation greater than England. I intrusted my son to you. Why did you not write and tell me, at the time, of the letter?

*Gordon.* We do not write to tell a man of his sin when we have his letter before us. As for the letter, you had better ask the khedive.

*Zebehr.* For your own honour you ought not to have given up the letter, but kept it privately yourself.

*Gordon.* But I gave it to the proper court.

*Zebehr.* Your name is known everywhere. You have been writing against me in the papers and in your books. Produce the letter.

*Gordon.* Ask the khedive, your master, for it. I had fifty copies of the trial printed, giving the whole history, and containing that letter.

*Zebehr.* Why did you print it?

*Gordon.* Because I wanted to show the peoples of Soudan that I was fighting, not about the slave-trade, but against rebels, and to settle who was to govern the Soudan.

*Zebehr.* My son met you at Darra with 4000 men, and you refused his help.

*Gordon.* That is not the question.

*Zebehr.* But my property was seized eight months before you found that letter.

*Gordon.* Yes, but even before I found that letter, I had had enough evidence to prove that you had been inciting your son to rebel.

*Zebehr.* Produce the letter.

*Gordon.* Well, there! That ends that business. Zebehr says that if the letter is found I am justified.

*Zebehr.* My son sent you nine emissaries from Darra; you shot them. He sent two more, and you shot them also.

*Gordon.* Then you have finished with the question of the letter. Now I will ask you if your son Suleiman did not kill the whole of the black garrison in the Bahr Gazelle?

*Zebehr.* My son came to you at Darra, and offered you 4000 men. He—

*Gordon.* That does not matter. Answer my question. During my absence from the Soudan, while I was at Aden—never mind where—did not your son Suleiman kill 200 black troops?

*Zebehr.* When you were governor-general I told my son to obey you—

*Gordon.* Did your son kill those 200 Egyptian soldiers?

*Zebehr.* My son offered these troops, 4000 men, to you, and you refused, and you dismissed—

*Gordon.* Did your son kill those 200 men? That is the point.

*Zebehr.* It was not my fault. You recommended my son to the khedive, who made him a colonel, and after that—

*Gordon.* Answer my question.

[Nubar Pasha repeats question to Zebehr.]

*Nubar Pasha.* Zebehr says that his son was no longer under his influence, but under the orders of Gordon Pasha. While under his father, Suleiman did no such things, but while under Gordon Pasha he could not answer for him.

*Gordon.* I want an answer to my question. (Repeated.)

*Zebehr.* You recommended my son—

*Nubar.* Zebehr says he was not responsible for Suleiman, as the latter was then a colonel under Gordon Pasha.

*Gordon.* Then I understand, Zebehr Pasha, that you do not deny that your son rebelled, or that, if he rebelled, he was liable to be put to death. I say your son did kill these 200 black troops in the Bahr Gazelle.

*Zebehr.* But what about my property having been confiscated?

*Gordon.* I told you before, that the letter is my justification for the confiscation. That ends the first question. If the letter is found, it will show that not only was all your property liable to be confiscated, but that you, too, were in danger of being put to death. On the other hand, if the government will allow me, I say that if the letter does not exist, and if your property has been unjustifiably confiscated, I shall then recommend the Egyptian government to compensate you for your loss. I shall be first to see that reparation is done to you.

*Zebehr.* I did not come to Cairo for money, but to see what was the will of the government, and to enlist men. As to my son—

*Gordon.* That is unnecessary. I treated your son with every consideration. I was not unkind to him; I did my best for him.

*Zebehr.* But you killed my son whom I intrusted to you. He was as your own son.

*Gordon.* Well, well, I killed my own son. There is an end of it.

*Zebehr.* And then you brought my wives and women and children in chains to Khartûm, a thing which, for my name in the Soudan, was most degrading.

*Gordon.* I differ from you. They were not in chains. I gave them every facility in the matter. But there! there is no use in Zebehr Pasha continually saying one thing and I another.

*Zebehr.* The greatness, the justice of England is known throughout the Soudan, but you did not treat me justly.

*Sir E. Baring.* General Gordon, have you any other questions to ask him except on these two points?

*Gordon.* No.

*Sir E. Baring.* Then I wish to explain to Zebehr Pasha that I called this meeting at my house at General Gordon's request; that General Gordon had heard that Zebehr had certain complaints to make against him; and that although it was not particularly my business to hear these complaints, at the same time, as General Gordon wished it, I was quite willing to be present at the discussion between General Gordon and Zebehr Pasha.

[Zebehr rose and kissed Sir E. Baring's hand.]

At present, the conversation, which has been rather desultory, has ranged over two points. The first point was whether Zebehr's property was justly or unjustly taken away from him. In respect to this point, if I understand rightly, the whole difference of opinion between General Gordon and Zebehr lies as to the existence of a certain letter which, General Gordon alleges, was a letter from Zebehr to his son Suleiman inciting him to rebellion. Is that correct, General Gordon?

*Gordon.* Quite correct.

*Sir E. Baring.* Zebehr denies the existence of that letter. General Gordon says that if that letter does not exist, and if, in fact, Zebehr Pasha was condemned upon evidence which, in default of the letter, would not have been conclusive, that he then thinks Zebehr should be compensated for his losses—

*Zebehr.* Compensation cannot be given to me for the honour of my wife and family; that is lost for ever.

*Sir E. Baring.* Zebehr recognizes, on the other hand, that, if that letter does exist, then that all that was done to him was justly done.

*Zebehr.* If that can be proved, that I incited my son to rebellion in the letter, I do not want to live; put me to death with the sword.

*Sir E. Baring.* General Gordon, to whom did you give the letter?

*Gordon.* To the present khedive and to the court-martial.

*Sir E. Baring.* Then it must be in the government archives.

*Gordon.* Yes; but, happily for me, I had it printed—in fact, fifty copies —and there is a copy at Khartûm.

*Sir E. Baring.* But the original would be annexed to the proceedings of the court. All we can do is to have a search made for it. Sir Evelyn Wood, will you see to that?

*Sir E. Wood.* Yes; and failing that, shall I get certificates from the people still alive who saw the letter?

[A short discussion ensued, and it was decided, first, to try and find the letter, and then to consider what would have to be done.]

*Gordon.* It will, of course, be fully understood that the mere fact of the letter not being found in the archives will not satisfy me that it never existed.

*Sir E. Baring.* Of course, I fully understand that. The second point refers to Zebehr's son. General Gordon put to Zebehr a very direct question, namely, whether his son had been a party to the killing of 200 black Egyptian troops in the Bahr Gazelle. Zebehr's answer is that whatever his son may have done, he, Zebehr, is not responsible for his actions;

*but* he does not, as I understand it, specifically deny what alleges—that his son killed these 200 men. Is that correct

*Zebehr.* I do not by any means deny it. I deny my r my son's conduct.

*Sir E. Baring.* Then Zebehr does not deny the action only his own responsibility for his son's action. I do no need discuss these two points any further.

This in effect ended the conference; but at a l er date, and when Gordon was asking that Zebehr might be se to join him at Khartûm and to aid him tti t insurrection and establishing a settled g the Soudan, a request with which the government b d t y could not safely or reasonably comply, the subject came again.

It must not be supposed that don afterwards had any doubt either that the letter which had been found on Zebehr's son had proved that "the black pasha" really instigated the rebellion, or that the letter itself, of which he had a number of copies, had been before the khedive and the court which tried Zebehr, but he may have doubted whether it was regarded as of weighty importance. He may have suspected that it had been treated with comparative indifference or had been destroyed, and with other evidence cancelled, after Zebehr's services in the Russo-Turkish war; and if so, Zebehr would not have scrupled to declare that any such alleged document was a forgery by which Gordon was imposed upon, or that he probably had a hand in concocting it. To such a man as Zebehr there is a boundless tract of lying always open, and he lied with such solemn assurance, and such appearance of placability and sense of injured innocence, that, whatever may have been the case in Egypt, a good many people in this country began to doubt whether Gordon had not made a mistake, and were ready at any-rate to give half credence to the pasha whom Gordon himself was so anxious to receive as a colleague and as a successor. It may have been that this professed readiness on the part of Zebehr to abandon the feeling which he had entertained on condition that his property in the Soudan was restored to him, and to be ready and willing to go to assist Gordon, for whom he found compliments

enough, gave rise to some suspicions. Whether this had any effect on our ministry or on the Egyptian ministry is a question, but the fact remains, that even though Sir E. Baring at last became converted to Gordon's opinions, and earnestly represented that the despatch of Zebehr to Khartûm would be the best, if not the only solution of the increasing difficulty, and the means of averting impending danger, Zebehr was not sent, and the government continued to refuse to reinstate him.

The object of General Gordon in seeking an interview with Zebehr Pasha before official witnesses was to discover what were the probabilities against securing the co-operation of the ex-chieftain in restoring a regular government to the Soudan. The result was not very promising, and we shall see that though Gordon tentatively sent proposals to Zebehr to make him sub-governor, the offer was not accepted. At a council held immediately after the interview, and consisting of Sir E. Baring, Nubar Pasha, Sir Evelyn Wood, Colonel Stewart, and General Gordon; Lieutenant-colonel Watson of the Egyptian army was asked what he thought of sending Zebehr and Gordon together to the Soudan. He answered, that not himself alone but natives thoroughly acquainted with both men were of opinion that such a policy would entail the death of one or other of them. This being the case, and with the recollection of what Gordon had indignantly said of Zebehr when it was proposed to send him back to the Soudan in 1879; remembering, too, that one of the first precautions suggested by Gordon when he undertook the mission to Khartûm was that Zebehr should be under careful surveillance; and perhaps, above all, recalling Gordon's memorandum in reply to a proposition of Cherif Pasha to employ Zebehr at Suakim, it is not to be wondered at that Sir E. Baring and others in authority at Cairo could not participate in the opinion that the former chief of the slave-trade could with safety be placed in a position which would give him an opportunity for attaining almost absolute power, and would enable him to defy the Egyptian government, if he chose to repudiate obligations which there would be no adequate authority to enforce. It is true that Sir E.

Baring afterwards came to the conclusion that Gordon was right in his opinion that Khartûm and the Soudan provinces should not be abandoned, and that Zebehr was the only man who could effectually be sent to succeed Gordon for the purpose of re-establishing the local governors and establishing a settled government; but in the opinion of the English government this conclusion was never sustained by reasons which outweighed the objections previously urged, and the probable consequences of taking such a course. With regard to the proposed employment of Zebehr at Suakim General Gordon had said on the 22d of January in a memorandum written on his voyage to Alexandria: "My objection to Zebehr is this. He is a first-rate general and a man of great capacity, and he would in no time eat up all the petty sultans and consolidate a vast state, as his ambition is boundless. I would therefore wish him kept away, as his restoration would be not alone unjust, but might open up the Turco-Arabic question. Left independent the sultans will doubtless fight among themselves, and one will try to annex the other; but with Zebehr it would be an easy task to overcome these different states and form a large independent one."

Colonel Stewart had said on the same subject: "Zebehr's return would undoubtedly be a misfortune to the Soudanese, and also a direct encouragement to the slave-trade. As he would be by far the ablest leader in the Soudan, he could easily overturn the newly erected political edifice, and become a formidable power."

The plain facts of the main narrative of Gordon's enterprise show not only that as he advanced he rapidly changed his estimate of its scope and purpose, but that he found he had not completely estimated the situation in which he would be placed and the difficulties with which he would have to contend. The insurrection was wider and more powerful than he expected, and the tribes had been committed more completely to the cause of the Mahdi or to the cause of emancipation from Egyptian rule than he had thought probable. He did not modify his previous opinions—he contradicted them. Zebehr, whom he had denounced, and whose restoration to power in the Soudan he had regarded as a course

to be urgently opposed, he came to think was the only man who could give him effectual aid. He had distinctly said that it would be unnecessary to send either British or Indian troops to his aid; but when the British government could not consent to be responsible for the appointment of Zebehr, he sent word that either a British or an Indian force should be despatched. It was not till he had realized the actual condition of affairs that General Gordon saw grounds for an entire change in his plans, the reasons for which could not be estimated by the government in England, unacquainted with the country and with the serious growth of the rebellion. They were unprepared to abandon the policy which they had distinctly declared. Though events were even then forcing them to consider the necessity for sending a British force to Suakim, they hesitated to send troops for the relief of Sinkat and Tokar, because they were uncertain whether the safety of Gordon and the plan for evacuating Khartûm might thereby be endangered, or as Mr. Gladstone asked on the 12th of February, "would an attempt of relief have the effect of endangering the measures for the extrication of the 29,000 men who after all must be regarded as of more weight than the 500 in Sinkat?" Such a question showed a want of definite information which prevented any action being taken for fear of doing the wrong thing first; but it was not unreasonable in view of the fact that there was a vast horde of Soudanese between Suakim and Kassala, extending very near to the route between Suakim and Berber, and that another great body of rebels occupied the country between the White and Blue Nile, threatening Sennâr, and extending towards Khartûm.

The tribes under Osman Digma who occupied this territory, threatened Suakim, and eventually closed the route to Berber, were the Hadendowas, who proved to be even more formidable foes than the Baggaras, led by the fierce dervishes who were under the immediate command of the Mahdi. The Hadendowas were, in fact, the people who provided camels for the Suakim-Berber routes before the rebellion. They are Soudanese, but with little Arab blood, as, like their neighbours the Bishareen, they sprang from an African (Hamitic) race, as their dark-brown skin

and their close bushy hair will show. They speak a corrupted form of Arabic, but also have a language of their own as the Bishareen have. Their religion is a superstitious and gross form of Islamism, and they are the most fearless and indomitable savages that were ever encountered by British troops.

It has been necessary to dwell with some distinctness on the anomalous position occupied by General Gordon in the relations between him and the British government, and to point out that the force of events and the vicissitudes of the situation rendered it impossible that he could succeed and yet consistently maintain the policy and the course of action which the ministry had declared. These conclusions, however, do not involve a charge of inconsistency, much less a suggestion of the shadow of a shade of dishonour against Gordon himself. It is essential to the proper understanding of the true narrative of our intervention in Egypt and the Soudan that these particular points should be dwelt upon; but we may now again follow the noble story of the man who, with an earnest desire to rescue the people at Khartûm, and if possible to deliver the whole country from anarchy and the subsequent return of the former power of the slave-hunting chiefs and their fell influence over the Soudan and the Equatorial provinces, had unhesitatingly given his services when he became convinced that they were asked for in good faith. Again, therefore, we turn in imagination to the heroic figure of the man to whom money and personal ease, fame, wealth, security, meant so little, and duty, beneficence, and devotion to the will of God, the realization of the spirit of Christianity and recognition of the needs and the claims of human beings, his brethren and sisters, black, brown, or white, meant so very much. He had relinquished the far more attractive and more lucrative appointment which had been concluded with the King of the Belgians, who not only agreed to pay him a good income, but had secured a fair annuity to be paid to his immediate relatives in case of his life being sacrificed to the enterprise of establishing the settlement on the Congo.

He was now, on the 26th of January, on his way from Cairo

for the primary purpose of evacuating the Soudan, by sending the civilian population and the Egyptian troops down to Assouan as soon as possible and by the best means that could be devised. Between Dongola and Gondokoro there was a whole population of civilians with their wives and children, and between 20,000 and 30,000 Egyptian troops loyal to the government. They were so seriously threatened by the advancing rebels that it had become almost a question of hours rather than of days whether they could be got out at all. Of the centres around which these populations clustered, Khartûm was the most important, and it was to Khartûm that Gordon and Stewart were hastening. Before he left Cairo the general took an opportunity, in the presence of Sir Evelyn Baring and others, to speak to the khedive words of apology for anything which he might have said or done hastily or mistakenly in disparagement of his highness; and the frank simplicity with which he confessed that under trying circumstances he had said and done things that he regretted, raised him in the opinion of both Tewfik Pasha and the prime minister. His last words with Nubar Pasha are said to have been: "I will save the honour of Egypt;" to which Nubar replied: "Never mind Egypt; save the women and children." There was no need to tell Gordon that.

In the subsequent language of Lord Granville, Gordon went for the double purpose of evacuating the country by the extrication of the Egyptian garrisons, and of reconstituting it by giving back to the chiefs their ancestral powers, which had been withdrawn or suspended during the period of the Egyptian government. Before he left Cairo he had suggested that a sultan of Darfûr should be appointed as a check to the Mahdi. Consequently the khedive sent for Ameer Abd-el-Shakoor, the heir of the chief from whom the province had been seized, and he was reinstated on the condition that he should maintain freedom of commerce and suppress the slave-trade within his province. He agreed readily enough, and accompanied the general to the Soudan, or rather for a portion of the journey, for Gordon was to go by rail to Assouan, thence embark for Wady Halfa and Korosko, and cross the desert to Abu Hamed, a difficult and dangerous journey, after which he

proposed to follow the Nile bank to Berber and Khartûm. It happened—one is almost tempted to say, of course it happened—that the young man chosen to rule Darfûr was altogether incompetent. At anyrate he took with him on his journey a considerable harem (forty wives it was said) and a retinue of servants, besides provisions and ample stores of wines or spirits. He was, in fact, a drunkard, and therefore a serious incumbrance till Gordon reached the point where he had to prepare for the desert journey which lay before him, and could leave the youth to go on to Darfûr under the protection of his own retainers.

As some rumour of this further example of Egyptian incompetency reached England together with a report that Gordon had taken £40,000 with him on his journey, a good deal of excitement was occasioned by speculations as to the probable safety of the general. It was feared that he would be intercepted and murdered, and as accounts of the investment of Tokar and the defeat of Baker's relieving force had reached England great anxiety prevailed. As we have already seen, Gordon experienced no interruption of his journey because of events in the Eastern Soudan and the Red Sea provinces, and had reached Berber before he heard such accounts as enabled him to offer an opinion on the effect of the later operations, or their influence upon the general situation in the Soudan. He had but £2000 with him when he started from Assouan, leaving the remaining sum to draw upon after he had accomplished the desert journey. On the 30th of January he reached Assouan, so well known to Nile travellers, who pass it in order to reach the first cataract three miles higher, and there he learned something about the aspect of affairs in the Soudan: that the Mahdi had still with him the deserters from Hicks' army, several powerful chiefs all concerned in maintaining the slave-trade, and several Arab tribes from which from 6000 to 8000 horsemen could be put in the field. These tribes, however, were reluctant to move out of their homes in the province of Kordofan, and this assured Gordon that the Bahr Gazelle country and the Equatorial provinces were not likely to be in immediate serious danger. He concluded that the revolt

between Khartûm and Sennâr had been effected by the agents of the false prophet, but the hostility of the Hadendowas had been instigated by the old grievance—the nefarious conduct of Egyptian officials. The Hadendowas, who were employed to find the camels for conveying the Egyptian troops from Suakim to Berber, and had actually fulfilled their contract by taking 10,000 men on the route, a description of which we have read, were to have been paid seven dollars for each transport camel for the journey; but the pasha and the bey who had that little contract in hand, following out the evil traditions of their race, had the villainous effrontery to put six out of the seven dollars, or, at all events, by far the chief proportion of the money, into their own pockets. The Hadendowas had no immediate redress; but it was not long before Osman Digma appeared, and they were then ready to take vengeance at Tokar, at Sinkat, and in the defeat of Baker which led to the necessity for the battles at El Teb and Tamai.

The same kind of story was told at Assouan, where the employés of the Soudan railway were three months in arrear of pay. They were ready for revolt, and Gordon telegraphed to Sir Evelyn Wood to send them their money without delay. At Korosko, where he arrived on the 2d of February, he heard of the state of affairs in the district between Khartûm and Sennâr.

There was no time to be lost. Gordon had already despatched a letter to the Mahdi from Assouan demanding that the Europeans at Obeid should be sent down to Khartûm. This was after his old manner. He spoke and acted always as a man whose authority was beyond cavil; and even if he had not underestimated the hold which the rebellion had taken and the power exercised by the false prophet, he would have abated nothing of his orders. Fugitives escaping from the Soudan were arriving at Korosko, as they continued to arrive for months afterwards, when the English government had officers at Assouan and Korosko to relieve their needs and expedite their journey, and when we had established a river patrol on the Nile and a force had been sent for the protection of Upper Egypt. Gordon immediately on hearing the condition of affairs between Sennâr and Khartûm had appointed

Colonel Stewart sub-governor of the Soudan, Ibrahim Bey director of war and marine, and Colonel Coetlogon governor of Khartûm. He then telegraphed to Nubar Pasha; "I am sending down many women and children to Korosko. I wish you would send a kind-hearted man to meet them. Give him £1000; a European is best."

He could stay no longer. The dangerous and dreary journey of two hundred and fifty miles across the desert to Abu Hamed was before him. He required little preparation. He had accomplished marvellous journeys before, though none more perilous

Assouan, the former Syene ("the opening"), is familiar to numerous tourists who have made the usual voyage to the first cataract and have made the customary visits to the island of Elephantine and to Philæ. It seems, indeed, as though the Nile journey terminated there, for the river's course cannot be followed by the eye when this point is reached, 580 miles from Cairo. Assouan is a place of importance, and has always been a point of interest to the traveller, for, as Mariette Bey said, "One is tempted to think one's self in a new world; Egyptians, Turks, Barobras, half-naked Bisharees, and negroes of every kind mingle here; the inhabitants of Khartûm are especially striking by their grand mien, black faces, and their fine heads, reminding one of the best types of northern races; to complete the picture, the merchandise consists of exotic gums, elephants' teeth, and the skins of beasts; in the midst of the crowd circulate the hawkers, no longer dealing in antiquities, but in clubs of ebony, pikes, lances, and arrows, whose iron points are said to be poisoned." But a change had come over the aspect of Assouan so far as the market and the merchandise were concerned. No travellers and tourists were there to visit the granite quarries, the Saracenic ruins, and the tombs of saints and sheikhs. The palm-groves and clusters of white houses were mostly deserted except by the inhabitants, and those who were there on the serious business of preparing for the evacuation of the Soudan and awaiting the arrival of small trading caravans, or of companies of perishing refugees and sick and wounded soldiers who had made their way from various points by the desert journey or Dongola,

and sought to reach this place of safety whence they might be forwarded to Cairo.

Wild and weird—or, as Miss Martineau called it, "fantastic and impish"—is the scenery from Assouan towards Philæ. The most remarkable features of the route are the inscriptions and hieroglyphics on the rocks, intended to commemorate the expeditions of some notable persons who had reached this point in safety. The view of Philæ itself has been often described, and the aspect of the place is beautifully picturesque, though its most ancient monuments are little older than the times of the foundation of Alexandria, the chief object being the ruins of the great temple of Isis, which with its necessary buildings must once have nearly covered the island. The author of the *Crescent and the Cross*, speaking of the view of Philæ from the opposite shore, says, "All round us towered up vast masses of gloomy rocks, piled one upon the other in the wildest confusion; some of them, as it were, skeletons of pyramids, others requiring only a few strokes of giant labour to form colossal statues that might have startled the Anakim. Here spreads a deep drift of silvery sand, fringed by rich verdure and purple blossoms; there a grove of palms intermingled with the flowering acacia; and there, through vistas of craggy cliffs and plumy foliage, gleams a calm blue lake, with the sacred island in the midst, green to the water's edge, except where the walls of the old temple city are reflected. Above those shrub-tangled and pillared banks were tall pyramids; columns airy, yet massive in their proportion; palms, and towers, and terraces. Beyond the island the lake glimmers through the ruins, and the whole scene of peace and beauty is frowned over by a girdle of rugged mountains, all scattered, and dark, and desolate." "Elephantine," says another writer, "lies in the river, from the foot of the cataract stretching down in front of Assouan about a mile, and is nearly half a mile in breadth. Its surface is a mass of ruins, shapeless and hideous. Ruin sits triumphant here. Not even the ploughshare of ancient history, which has run over so many ruins, could prevail here to penetrate the mass. A small part of the island is cultivated, but a large portion still remains in

the condition I have described, and so will remain so long as the world stands. Fragments of statues, a gateway of the time of the mighty son of Philip, an altar whose fire was long ago extinguished in the blood of its worshippers; these and similar relics remain, but nothing to indicate the shape, extent, or date of any of the buildings that formerly covered the island."

Of the first cataract itself there is not much to say. It is not really a cataract, but a number of rapids of the Nile swirling and dashing amidst a number of scattered rocks and great rugged boulders—rocks grotesque in shape and wild in aspect, apparently forming a portion of the two chains of mountains between which the Nile flows at this point. The whole scene is barren, savage, and desolate, but it has a grandeur of its own, and the trouble of passing the cataract is repaid by the change of country beyond the four miles of troubled water. For Egypt is left behind, and the land between the first and second cataract is the land of Nubia, where the scenery is more delightful, the climate in many respects to be preferred. At one time few travellers ventured beyond Assouan and Philæ; but now it is common enough to pursue the journey 210 miles further to the second cataract, to Korosko, whence the direct road lies across the desert to Abu Hamed and the Upper Nile, Shendy, Sennâr, and Khartûm, so that the little village lying back from the river on the edge of the desert used to be the entrepôt, the Nile bank being usually lined with the tents and merchandise of traders waiting for camels to take them on the long desolate journey across the wilderness, or for boats to convey them to Assouan.

The second cataract, however, is above ninety miles further up the Nile, at Wady Halfa, some fifty miles beyond the vast and magnificent ruins of the temples of Aboo Simbel, hewn out of the gritstone rock in the time of Rameses II. Wady Halfa has some vestiges of antiquity of its own, but it is not a lively place under ordinary conditions, and even when it resounded with the bustle and noise of a military encampment it could scarcely have been inviting; though the town, named from the halfa, a coarse grass which grows abundantly there, is not unpicturesque when, beside

the mud huts of the ordinary inhabitants, built, or rather "stuck up," under the shade of a great thicket of palm-trees, there is an encampment of black traders who have pitched their tents, unloaded their camels, set out their merchandise, and for a time settled with their families on the banks of the Nile till it is time for them either to take the desert journey or to proceed into Egypt. But it is from Korosko, the scattered village at the foot of a strangely-shaped volcanic mountain from the peak of which a grand and vast view of river and desert can be obtained, that the journey across the wilderness is mostly taken. Starting from a green oasis in a valley, but leading at once to a gloomy gorge inclosed by black frowning precipices, the travellers enter upon the track across the Nubian desert which traverses the chord of an arc made by the great westerly bend of the Nile. This was Gordon's route, and though there was considerable anxiety for his safety when it was known that he had mounted his camel, struck into the desert, and was about to accomplish the journey by one of his rapid rides, neither he nor Colonel Stewart considered that there was any great peril either from the journey or from probable attacks of Arabs. The monopoly of the desert transit between Korosko and Abu Hamed was possessed by the Khalifē family, the representative of which was Hussein Pasha Khalifē Mudir of Berber and a man of great influence. Close to Korosko was a camp of Bedouins, who were supposed to guard the desert road and assist in the general defence of the country. The country was traditionally dangerous, however, and the desert between Korosko and Abu Hamed was so dreaded that Said Pasha once ordered the route to be closed; but it was opened again, upon application of the foreign consuls, as the most direct route to the Soudan. So far as interruptions or attacks by natives were concerned Gordon was not the man to regard such probabilities. All his anxiety was to get to his destination as quickly as possible, and he sped on, over the plain of orange-coloured sand, through barren valleys, amidst bare broken hills of black basalt, conical accumulations of slag and volcanic or granite boulders; across desolate wastes with a few stunted trees only breaking the drear monotony; through the "Bab" or gates, an

THE FIRST CATARACT OF THE NILE.

opening between rocky hills into a bare sandy waterless plain; through an arid country, miles and miles in extent, with a few conical mounds covered with granite boulders—the Bahar-bela-Moy, or sea without water; past a waterless well dug by Mohammed Ali, and surrounded with stones; and so on through a dry valley at the foot of a low range of hills where a few trees give a temporary shelter, but where the day and night temperature differs from 30 to 40 degrees. Thence the way was through winding stony ravines, and over small plains bounded by low rocky hills with a few clove-palms showing here and there, to Murâhd, a halting-place where there was a small Arab camp, a rough house or shed, and a well of water so brackish and bitter (as the name implies) that only camels can drink it, though it is the only water to be procured during the whole of the long and wearisome journey. Travellers must take their own supply. Sir Samuel Baker, in 1861, was obliged to make a forced march to save the water which evaporated because of the heat of the sun upon the surface of the water-skins.

Hour after hour, mile after mile—the rapid but wearisome march was continued till Abu Hamed was reached. The distance was accomplished in fifty-two hours by an almost uninterrupted ride, that is to say, at about five miles an hour, an extraordinary rate for such a journey. Sir Samuel Baker's forced march occupied ninety-two hours, but his camels were laden and the hot season had commenced, for he had to cross the desert in May, whereas Gordon accomplished the journey just at the end of the cooler season in the beginning of February.

"A small village utterly destitute of everything," is the description given by Baker of Abu Hamed; and the sterile desert extends to the very margin of the Nile. It was in accordance with his old plans that Gordon travelled swiftly and accomplished as much as possible of the journey by night. He liked to be travelling seated on his camel amidst those vast solitudes—but the solitudes of the Nubian desert are awful. Sir Samuel Baker describes part of the journey—a dead level plain of orange-coloured sand, surrounded by pyramidal hills: the surface strewn with objects

resembling cannon shot and grape of all sizes, from a 32-pounder downwards—the spot looking like the old battle-field of some infernal region—rocks glowing with heat—not a vestige of vegetation—barren, withering desolation. Many of the "cannon shot" are as perfectly round as though cast in a mould, others are egg-shaped, and all are hollow. On breaking them they are found to contain light-red sand, and are, in fact, volcanic bombs formed by the ejection of molten lava to a great height from active volcanos; they become globular on falling, and having cooled before reaching the earth retain their forms as hard spherical bodies. The exterior is brown and appears to be rich in iron. The smaller specimens are the more perfect spheres, as they cooled quickly, but many of the heavier masses have evidently reached the earth when only half solidified and collapsed upon falling. The sandy plain is covered with such volcanic vestiges, and the bombs lie as imperishable relics of a hail-storm such as may have destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. From this scene of solitude the traveller passes to another aspect of desolation, and in the hot season the burning simoom blows over the terrible wilderness and drifts the hot sand into the crevices of the rocks; but in the cooler night the air becomes invigorating and refreshing by contrast, and the desert has a peculiar charm as the horizon of its nakedness is limited: the rocks assume fantastic shapes in the bright moonlight, and the profound stillness produces an effect of the supernatural in that wild and mysterious solitude. But there is no water. The well at Murâhd is in an extinct crater surrounded on all sides by precipitous cliffs about 300 feet high. The bottom is a dead flat valley of sand 250 yards wide, and there the salt and bitter water is found at a depth of only about six feet, but only the camels can touch it, and the skeletons of camels lie in all directions—withered heaps of parched skin and bone, the dry desert air having converted the hides into leathern coffins, and as there are no flies, the crows—though even they are not always numerous in this valley of dry bones—despatch the inner carcasses. Many years ago, when the Egyptian hosts first conquered Nubia, a regiment was destroyed by thirst in crossing this desert. The men were on a limited allowance of water, and, deceived by the

appearance of a mirage exactly resembling a beautiful lake, insisted on being led to its banks by the Arab guide, who told them in vain that it was an illusion. They quarrelled with him, words led to blows, and he was killed. The whole regiment turned from the track where they left him weltering in his blood, and hurried over the burning sands further and further towards the supposed lake, but only to be lost and to perish in the desert, where their parched and withered corpses were afterwards discovered by a party of Arabs sent in search of them. So intense is the heat that woodwork warps, ivory knife-handles split, paper breaks when crunched in the hand, and the extreme dryness of the air induces an extraordinary amount of electricity in all woollen materials. Poor and destitute as the village of Abu Hamed is, it is a place of rest and refuge after the desert journey, for there is the sight of the Nile after the long arid desolation, the luxury of a bath and of comparatively unlimited water.

Here General Gordon arrived on the 8th of February, and here he found messengers from different parts of the country to welcome him. It is pretty evident that unless he had received from the khedive the firmans appointing him Governor-general of the Soudan, he could not have exercised much control over the Egyptian authorities employed in the province, and on his arrival at Abu Hamed he considered not only that the state of the country was less disorganized than he had at first supposed, but that a kind of suzerainty should still be kept up by the Egyptian government. His message to Sir E. Baring on the 8th of February was:

"From the various telegrams soliciting appointments and from other signs of confidence in the government, it is evident that the country is far less disturbed than has been reported, and that very probably the mass of civil employés will refuse to leave the Soudan, even if dismissed and their expenses paid to Cairo. Both with a view to eventual evacuation and also to economy, it will be absolutely necessary to reduce all establishments to a minimum; and should the dismissed employés refuse to leave the country, I propose making them sign a paper releasing the Egyptian government from all future responsibility on their behalf.

I consider that on my arrival at Khartûm my first object should be to send to Cairo the families of all deceased employés, soldiers, &c., and to attempt the pacification of the country and the reopening of the communications. When these objects are fulfilled, I would wish your excellency to consider what is to follow.

You are aware that a regular system of posts and telegraphs exists: legal courts, financial and other departments are established, and that, in short, the country has, during a considerable time, been accustomed to a more or less controlling and directing government. To disturb, if not annihilate, this system at a moment's notice would appear to me to hand over the country to complete anarchy. Consider what the situation will be. Let it be supposed that the Soudan, or at least the east Soudan, is tranquillized, its administration 'Soudanized,' native mudirs appointed, refugees all sent to Cairo, the Equatorial and Bahr Gazelle provinces evacuated, and the Egyptian troops ready to leave. Suppose that the firman dissolving the connection between Egypt and the Soudan is read, and the result will inevitably be that each mudir will aim at securing his own independence, and that a period of violent and protracted commotion will ensue, which may very possibly react prejudicially on Egypt, owing to the intimate connection which has for so long obtained between the two countries.

Hence I would suggest that the government of Egypt should continue to maintain its position as a suzerain power, nominate the governor-general and mudirs, and act as a supreme court of appeal. Its controlling influence should, however, be a strictly moral one, and limited to giving advice.

In spite of all that has occurred, I feel satisfied that the prestige of the Cairo government, except in so far as the conduct of its troops in the field is concerned, is not seriously shaken, and that the people still continue to look up to the Cairo government as the direct representative of the sultan as khalif, and would look with horror on a complete separation. Should a nominal control, such as I advise, be maintained, it is evident that it could in no way involve the Egyptian government, and that the prestige

which the governors, mudirs, &c., would acquire from being nominated by Cairo would most probably secure them against rivals. On the other hand, in the event of the mudir becoming unpopular, an order for his removal from Cairo would carry great weight, and most probably ensure his dismissal. I would therefore earnestly beg that evacuation, but not abandonment, be the programme to be followed, and that the firman with which I am provided be changed into one recognizing moral control and suzerainty. In offering this suggestion, I must, however, premise that the moral control will be exercised by the Egyptian government as a responsible body, and that all nominations will be made by the ministry uninfluenced by any individual, however exalted may be his position. I am persuaded that, by following the above policy on the lines I have drawn, neither her majesty's government nor yet the Egyptian government would incur any risk, and that they would be able to secure, in a greater or lesser degree, the future of the Soudan."

To this declaration on the part of General Gordon Lieutenant-colonel Stewart added his remarks or endorsement just as he did on other occasions. He considered that, though it could not be denied that anarchy and bloodshed would ensue were the policy of abandonment carried out in its entirety, a solution in the direction as pointed out by General Gordon would altogether depend upon what policy her majesty's government intended to pursue towards Egypt. Should they decide to evacuate Egypt, and to cease having a controlling and directing voice in the affairs of that country, he was decidedly of opinion that it would be far better, in the interests of both countries, to abandon the Soudan. To allow in such a case Egypt to maintain even a nominal control over the Soudan would only tend to ensure further attempts at active interference, with their accompaniment of misgovernment, oppression, venality, and Cairene intrigue.

In the event of her majesty's government retaining a directing voice in Egyptian affairs General Gordon's advice might be followed with considerable advantage. Although Stewart did not quite agree with him that the prestige of Cairo had not been

greatly diminished, still he thought that sufficient of it remained to exert a beneficial influence towards curbing the forces of disorder in the Soudan. Whether, or for how long, such an influence might last it was impossible to say. Probably in time, unless the Egyptian government took a more active part in removing mudirs at the request of the people, it would gradually wane and wear out; but, at anyrate, for some time to come it would probably be strong enough to act usefully as a moral support to the Soudanese government, and to diminish the extent of the change.

Nothing can be plainer than that Gordon with his usual rapid and inclusive calculation of possibilities, had been considering what alternatives might be adopted in furtherance of the two objects which he had set before himself: the deliverance of the Europeans and the Egyptian garrisons, and the foundation of a settled central government at Khartûm. He seems at first to have had an intention to go in person to the Mahdi, to repeat his former successful method of dealing with the slave-hunting pashas and sultans by appearing suddenly before him as one who had come to command and who meant to be obeyed, or, at all events, as one who feared nothing that the rebels could conspire to do to him, and who was willing to negotiate with them as a concession, being conscious of a reserve of force which could be brought to compel them if they refused to listen to reasonable proposals. Even bearing this explanation in mind, however, it is not easy to understand the message which he left behind him at Cairo to be given to Mr. Clifford Lloyd, who was engaged there in the direction of financial affairs: "Tell Lloyd, no panics. It is possible that I may go to the Mahdi, and not be heard of for two months, for he might keep me as a hostage for Zebehr. You can tell Lloyd this when you get to Cairo, so that he can publish it at the right time, if necessary."

It must surely have occurred to Gordon that this message, if made known to Sir E. Baring and the government, would cause a serious flutter, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he gave a touch of his rather caustic humour in leaving such a memorandum. It was the first hint he had given of taking his own way

of doing things, and directly Sir E. Baring heard of it, he wrote to prevent him from doing anything except under orders. Gordon was to be only nominally free to act. The whole circumstances were extraordinary—might soon become dangerous or even desperate; he was the man who, from experience of the country, knowledge of the people, and former successes in dealing with them, was best fitted to act with requisite promptitude, and to know how far even his own plans must be altered under changing conditions, and yet the official tape was already preparing which was to bind him hand and foot to a declared policy, the maintenance of which was entirely inconsistent with sending such a man to Khartûm, or even with suffering him to go thither with any hope that the liberty of discretion, which was promised to him, would be any more than a phrase of courtesy.

Owing to Mr Clifford Lloyd's illness the message was not shown to Sir E. Baring till after Gordon had started from Korosko on his desert journey; but a telegram was sent to him to Berber from Sir E. Baring repeating the message Mr. Lloyd received, and adding, "I hope you will give me a positive assurance that you will on no account put yourself voluntarily in the power of the Madhi. The question is not a personal one. There would, in my opinion, be the strongest political objections to your risking a visit to the Mahdi."

Sir E. Baring had intended to wait before communicating on the subject with the government until he had received General Gordon's answer from Berber; but the telegraph line between Berber and Khartûm had been cut by the tribes of that district, so that it might have been impossible to communicate with him by telegraph when once he left the former place, and the representative at Cairo was therefore in a terrible state of consternation, and requested Lord Granville to inform him at once whether he might give General Gordon a positive order from the government that he was on no account to visit the Mahdi. The reply was "diplomatic." While faintly encouraging the government representative at Cairo, it dodged the responsibility of definitely hindering what might possibly have been a desirable or politic determination on

the part of Gordon. It showed plainly enough what was the truth, that neither the government nor anybody else, including Gordon himself, who was not in the midst of the rebellion, knew what was the precise condition of affairs in the Soudan, or could calculate on the rapid and extensive spread of the insurrection and the irrevocable manner in which the chiefs and their followers were committed to it. The answer was prompt enough, no time was lost in replying:—"Your message to General Gordon, referred to in your telegram of to-day, is approved, and you are authorized, if you think it necessary and desirable to do so, to convey to General Gordon our approval of it."

But there was another flutter. The "panics" had not been avoided by keeping the message to Mr. Clifford Lloyd secret, for the public anxiety was directed to the safety of the man who was then crossing the desert without knowing what was taking place at Suakim. Gordon was still seriously considering the advantage of securing the co-operation of Zebehr Pasha. He believed the ruling passion of the man to be money, and considered that if he were but well subsidized he would not injure even the person against whom he had a "blood feud," but would by his still potent influence and the hope of continued wealth and authority gain over the tribes from the Mahdi and consent to establish a regular government in the Soudan under the former tribal chiefs or mudirs. He was convinced that he would renounce slave-hunting, and that the provincial governors might be paid an annual sum to compensate them for not permitting slave-dhows on the river or caravans on the land to pass through their territories. But beyond this Gordon turned his eyes towards the Bahr Gazelle and the Equatorial provinces, whither he and Stewart and Power might go, and by taking the scheme of the King of the Belgians abolish the operations of the traders in the Soudan, prevent the slave-hunting in these provinces, and so succeed in dealing a death-blow to the traffic from Khartûm to the Congo. The British government, after serious consideration, did not agree with him that the appointment of Zebehr would effect these objects. They came to the decided conclusion that the restoration of such

a man to power would mean the revival of the wo
of which he had before been the chief supporter; a
supported in this belief by weighty evidence of th
the man with whom they would have to deal, by th
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himself. Added to this was the overwhelming rel anc
they felt at taking any action which might commi o
to the indefinite responsibility of a costly, and perhap a disas
intervention in a vast desert territory like the Sou an, wher
would be impossible to maintain European forces of occupati
and the abandonment of the eady urged upo
Egypt.

But before this propositio the reinstatement of Zebehr ha
been fully discussed, thou not before it had been seriou
proposed, Gordon had writt on the 1st of February fro
Korosko, before starting for Abu Hamed, a letter to Sir E. Bari
inclosing another which was to be sent to the King of the Belgian

"Here is a letter I have written to the King of the Belgia
His majesty told me he would take these two provinces if he co
get them when I was at Brussels; also that he would take over
the troops in them. You might mention this to the foreign office,
and send them copy of the letter. It would settle the slave-trade."

The full text of the letter to the King of the Belgians has not been published, but it is easy to imagine what must have been the shock to official decorum to have received such an astounding communication. If Gordon was going on in this manner any government might be excused for being alarmed at him, and for declining to commit itself to any but such diplomatic language as could be made to cover no responsibility. Sir E. Baring in inclosing the letter to Earl Granville said:

"I have the honour to inclose copy of a letter from General Gordon inclosing a letter to be forwarded to the King of the Belgians, in which he urges his majesty to occupy the Bahr Gazelle and the Equatorial provinces, and to appoint him governor-general of all that country. He seems to intend to go straight on in that direction from Khartûm. I do not think that General Gordon

should be allowed, at all events for the present, to go anywhere south of Khartûm."

Then there went from London one of those stiff acknowledgments which are calculated to thrill the blood of the unwary. It ended: "I have to state that her majesty's government are of opinion that General Gordon should not at present go beyond Khartûm."

Gordon had played leading cards, but there was no response. Two of the possible solutions of the difficulties that lay before him had been rejected, and it cannot be denied that, if not premature, they were somewhat speculative. He did not long keep official propriety in trepidation, however. On the 11th of February Sir E. Baring was able to telegraph that, as regarded the message left at Cairo for Mr. Clifford Lloyd, General Gordon had stated that he had no intention of visiting the Mahdi; and on the following day that the general had sent a telegram to say that he would not go further south than Khartûm without permission.

Gordon had, of course, reached Berber when he sent these telegrams. He had learned that the Bahr Gazelle and the Equatorial provinces were then in less danger than had been supposed. At Abu Hamed he had been encouraged by the number of persons coming in. Four hundred had come to him asking for appointments. There was great enthusiasm directly he made his appearance, and he began to think that the power of the Mahdi might soon be checked.

He thought that events at Suakim would have no adverse influence over the situation at Khartûm. The business of conveying to Cairo the fugitives coming into Berber or Abu Hamed from various parts of the country was taken up with vigour. "The people are coming in on all sides with enthusiasm. I hope soon the Soudan will be perfectly tranquil." This was the key-note of several telegrams at that time. "Stewart and I are all right; do not bother about us." He asked for camels to convey families from Abu Hamed to Korosko, and he wanted two steamers for embarking them at Berber or Khartûm. A portion of Sir Evelyn Wood's Egyptian army was to go to Assouan—two battalions, one field-battery and one Gatling.

It was on the 11th of February that Gordon landed at Berber, whither he had gone by boat from Abu Hamed; and the change must have been welcome, for Berber was a pleasant place by comparison—a large town with a male population of about 3000, and, of course, a centre of traffic, as the caravans from Suakim and Korosko transferred goods to the Nile boats there. The town, protected by about 4500 yards of earthworks, resembled other towns on the Nile; the streets unpaved and dirty, the flat-roofed houses built of sun-dried brick; but the great attractions were the gardens, full of lofty date groves and shady citron and lemon trees, the birds singing and the doves cooing in the palms.

Gordon had little time to stay and much work to do. He was received with the utmost satisfaction. The town was illuminated during his stay, and in reply to messages from Sir E. Baring telling him that it was not only of personal but of political importance that he should run no risks, he was able to say that he was well received and numbers of people were coming in from all parts of the country to profess their allegiance, that he was in the midst of the best families, and that some of the principal chiefs would accompany him to Khartûm. He was in no danger, and looked forward quickly to effect his chief mission, the evacuation, and not the immediate abandonment, but the pacification and settlement, of the Soudan. That the people might be assured of his intention to abolish the tyranny under which they had suffered, to renew their old privileges, and to establish a system of free government, he published, both at Berber and Khartûm, a series of proclamations setting forth the plans that he should adopt. It may be stated at once, that on being questioned closely by some of the chief persons, he candidly declared that he had abandoned any intention to carry out the provision of the treaty for the entire abolition of slavery in 1887. He always believed that even if that treaty could be temporarily carried out it would have disastrous results; he always carefully distinguished between the holding of domestic slaves, which was a custom of the country not to be soon eradicated, and the hunting or stealing of natives of the villages for the purpose of selling them into slavery. Against the depopulation of villages, the

seizing of men, women, and children, and the deportation of gangs and caravans of unfortunate creatures across the desert and in slave-dhows on the Nile, he was as determined as ever, though it would be impossible to take any immediate action with regard to it; but so far as the retention of slaves was concerned, he distinctly said that the owners of slaves would not be compelled to forfeit that "property," or be otherwise interfered with by attempts to prepare for the realization of the treaty. It would have been futile to have endeavoured to do otherwise. He and the English government, who endorsed his action in this respect, had to accept the situation as they found it. Slavery had not ceased, nor was it likely to cease under the Mahdi, who was dependent on the men to whose interest it had been to restore the traffic and to undo much of the work that Baker and Gordon had accomplished. The assurance that no one would be compelled to give up his slaves was regarded as a concession and strengthened Gordon's position with the chiefs, and, as we have already seen, domestic slavery in Egypt and even in the towns of the Soudan was not to be regarded as a hardship to those who endured it. It was an entirely different institution to that of the system of field and plantation slavery in the West Indies and the Southern States of America.

In a report subsequently published by Colonel Duncan, the commander of the troops in Upper Egypt, concerning the refugees who had been received by him at Assouan it is mentioned: "The most striking feature, to my mind, was the large family and retinue I generally found with the government officials. Many had undoubtedly been slaves, but most had obtained their letters of freedom before they reached Assouan. For those who had not, I procured these letters from the civil authorities. I observed that the letters were always in the possession of the masters and never of the servants, and I doubt if many of the latter knew of their existence, and they were quite indifferent when told of it." This was written in July, and referred to the refugees coming through in April and May. At Berber, early in February, Gordon thought there were so many signs of confidence in the government

that probably the mass of civil employés would refuse to leave the Soudan even if they were dismissed and their expenses paid to Cairo. It was absolutely necessary, however, to reduce all establishments to a minimum, and he proposed, if these people refused to leave the country, to make them sign a paper releasing the Egyptian government from future responsibility for them. His first object was to send to Cairo the families of all deceased employés, soldiers, &c., and to attempt the pacification of the country and the reopening of communications. When these objects were fulfilled, it would be necessary to consider what must follow. For a considerable time the country had been accustomed to a more or less controlling and directing government, to a system of posts, telegraphs, legal courts, and financial and other departments; and to disturb, if not annihilate, this system at a moment's notice appeared to him to be handing over the country to complete anarchy. Supposing the Eastern Soudan tranquillized, its administration "Soudanized," native mudirs appointed, refugees all sent to Cairo, the Equatorial and Bahr Gazelle provinces evacuated, and the Egyptian troops ready to leave. Supposing the firman dissolving the connection between Egypt and the Soudan to have been read, and the result would be that each mudir would aim at securing his own independence, and that a period of violent and protracted commotion would ensue, which might react prejudicially on Egypt owing to the intimate connection which had so long obtained between the two countries. He suggested, therefore, that the Egyptian government should maintain its position as a suzerain power, nominate the governor-general and mudirs, and act as a supreme court of appeal, but with a controlling influence strictly moral, and limited to giving advice. He was then of opinion that the prestige of the Cairo government was not seriously shaken except in so far as the conduct of its troops in the field was concerned, and that the people regarded that government as representing the sultan and would look with horror on a complete separation. It is not difficult to see, therefore, why he clung to the notion of the appointment of a clever, crafty, influential, and able governor such as Zebehr, who,

as a once powerful native chieftain, would consolidate such a government and hold the otherwise refractory mudirs in check. He afterwards had to discover that the extent of the rebellion was greater than he had anticipated; that it was beyond the power of Egypt to wrestle with, and this made him the more urgently anxious for the appointment of the still influential chief to gather the tribes around him and restore a regular government under the moral control of that at Cairo. There came the chief point where he and the British government were entirely at variance. He thought that Zebehr, appointed to succeed him as governor of the Soudan and assisted by him to pacificate the country, would "smash the Mahdi," and rule the Soudan with as much equity as could be reasonably expected. The cabinet in England believed, judging from Zebehr's character and antecedents, that he would be more likely to join the Mahdi for the achievement of his own ends, keep the government in his own hands, and restore the worst features of the slave-trade, and take the country out of all hope of restoration.

The proclamations issued by Gordon were addressed to different classes of people, the first being a general declaration that he had come to extricate the Soudan from difficulties and complications, to establish tranquillity and prevent the shedding of Moslem blood, to secure to the inhabitants their property, children, and wives, and to put a stop to injustice and oppression, which had been the cause of the rebellion. He therefore wiped off all arrears due from the people to the end of 1883; reduced to one-half the taxes of 1884, as well as all taxes introduced by Raouf Pasha. He gave them the right to keep the slaves in their service without any interference from the government or anybody else. He ended by saying, "You should live in peace; do not expose yourselves to perdition; and avoid following the devil's path. Warn the inhabitants, and reveal to them the good news, in order that they may walk in the path of righteousness, and turn away from the evil one. Whoever wishes to see me, let him come and dread nothing."

In subsequent declarations he confirmed his references to slave-holding and to the remission of taxation, and added: "The taxes

due to the end of 1883 will be wiped off, owing to your inability to pay them. I will burn the registers as an act of clemency. I have also pardoned your former misdeeds. The inhabitants should therefore be warned accordingly, and should be informed that I abhor war, which causes bloodshed. My sole desire is that the inhabitants should live in peace and enjoy their property and agriculture under the auspices of the khedive."

To the inhabitants and merchants he announced, that as commercial transactions in Soudan goods within the Soudan was not prohibited, whether exported to the western provinces, such as Kordofan, Darfûr, or other places, if any one wished to import or export any goods the government would not prevent him from so doing or interfere in any way with his trade.

He warned the employés not to petition him for increase of salary, because, having forgone half the taxes due by the natives, which reduced the revenue, circumstances would not allow increase in the expenditure.

His proclamation to all the notables and the inhabitants of the Soudan afterwards promulgated said: "Let it be known to you all that I have been appointed, in concert between the khedive's government and the government of Great Britain, governor-general of the whole Soudan, and the Soudan has now become an independent state to govern itself without the intervention of the Egyptian government in any way whatever. The mudirs and governors have been informed accordingly.

"I am now ready to see to your prosperity and good government, and endow you with the privileges which were granted to you by the late Said Pasha. It should be known to you that the sultan had the intention of sending an expedition of strong Turkish troops to subdue the rebellious provinces, but his knowledge of your condition and of my kindness to you during the four years I was governor-general of the Soudan has prevented him from sending such an expedition, and I have come in person, by the will of God, to prevent war between the Moslems and the shedding of blood, which is contrary to the will of God, his Prophet, and his saints.

"Know ye that I propose to convene a council composed of the kings and notables of the Soudan, and I have ordered that you be governed by natives of the Soudan, in order that you may not be deprived of your rights as heretofore. . . . The council in question will meet twice a week, and as often as emergency may require. You are pardoned."

The council for the government of Berber consisted of eleven members under the presidency of Hussein Pasha Khalifa, governor-general of Dongola and Berber, and it was announced that the governor of the Soudan should be of Soudanese origin, "for the greater tranquillity of the natives, so that you can have no cause of complaint from injustice as before." A similar proclamation was made for Khartûm, where Awad el Kerim Pasha Abu Sin, Mudir of Khartûm, was president of the council.

Another proclamation, issued to all the inhabitants a few days later, was intended as a warning.

"Since my arrival I have constantly assured you of good treatment and justice, and advised you to desist from rebellion which leads to war and bloodshed; but finding that this advice had no effect upon some people, I have been compelled to use severe measures, so much so that British troops are now on their way, and in a few days will reach Khartûm; then, whoever persists in bad conduct will be treated as he deserves. Therefore upright men should have no intercourse with rebels, or they will share the same fate. I am watching things closely, and you should not think I am ignorant of what goes on. The present rebellion will bring ruin on the country and much loss of life. The wise man is his own guardian."

There is something of Orientalism, perhaps, in the references to the intentions of the sultan to have sent an expedition of strong Turkish troops, and also to the approach of British troops. Gordon had, perhaps, some notion that either of these contingencies might occur, for there had been some parleying at Constantinople about the intervention of the sultan. At anyrate the translation of his words into or out of Arabic may make a good deal of difference. It should be added, too, that he was expecting to hear of the

opening of the Suakim-Berber route by a British force. As early as February 1st he had telegraphed from Assouan that Hussein Pasha Khalifa hoped to be able to open that road in a few days; but we know how that became impossible. It will be seen that, active as were Gordon's preparations for evacuating the country, he simultaneously provided for its pacification and the establishment of a settled government, so that on his retirement some one might succeed him.

On the 14th of February Gordon left Berber on his way to Shendy, where the people assembled on the river bank to receive him with acclamations. They regarded him as their deliverer, and their chiefs were ready to confer with him. Instead of the danger from lurking Arabs, which had been suggested by newspapers and by society in England, the crowd of people here, at the point of the three great caravan roads between Darfûr, Sennâr, and Suakim, hailed him as the representative of justice. The proclamation which had preceded him to Khartûm removed the doubts and suspicions which many there were inclined to hold regarding the claims that would be made upon them for arrears of oppressive taxes, and for enforcing the decree which would terminate their property in slaves. In England this concession raised a cry of mingled surprise and denunciation, and in some instances a cry of grief too; but people here could not estimate what slavery meant in that country, and that it was only the retention of existing domestic slaves—an institution which could not, under the circumstances, be altered—that was contemplated by Gordon. It offended numbers of people here, but it helped to restore Gordon to his old footing of confidence and power at Khartûm, and he could not possibly have refused to recognize the existence and the continuance of slavery in that form. At all events, to Khartûm he went on the 18th of February, and there, amidst enthusiastic crowds who pressed forward to kiss his hands and salute him as the saviour of the country, he passed through the city.

The arrival of Gordon and Stewart entirely changed the aspect of affairs at Khartûm. "I came without soldiers, God on my side, to redress the evils of the Soudan. I will not fight with any

weapons but justice. There shall be no more Bashi-Bazouks," said Gordon. His speeches were brief, but they were to the purpose, and there were no more attempts at disturbance in the town when he arrived there—no more fears either for the people or the garrison. He had proclaimed the Mahdi Sultan of Kordofan. It was one of his bold rapid strokes, and might have been successful. It was said that the false prophet was amazingly delighted when the formal appointment reached him, but this was doubtful, as he would have been more likely to look upon such a message from a Christian governor appointed by Egypt as an insult. Possibly, however, he took the view of it that any such acknowledgement of his authority was an endorsement which could be made to serve his purpose. It is quite likely that Achmed Ahmet was very much of a puppet in the hands of men like Raouf Pasha and other treacherous governors of provinces, but he was a fanatic and pretender who maintained an authority of his own, and, ignorant as he was, his ambition appears to have been almost boundless. Gordon said that it was Raouf Pasha who had first called him the Mahdi. It was a name to conjure with amidst an oppressed and discontented people, who yet were the victims of those who led them into rebellion for the purpose, not of diminishing their burdens or of increasing their liberties, but of diverting the taxation that might be wrung from them into other channels, and of becoming masters of the country without being answerable to the Egyptian government. "Gordon Pasha will be received as a friend of the Arabs and blacks. His coming means no more Turks, with their backsheesh and kourbash. But he should have come a year ago; it is now too late," said an Arab who stood reading the proclamations.

At first this was not so apparent. Gordon appeared to be able to grasp the situation, and his former vigorous and prompt reforms were not forgotten, for he at once began to resume the policy which he had carried out at Khartûm in the former time of his authority, when peace and security were restored to that riotous, corrupt, and pestilent centre of the Soudan government. Immediately on his arrival he summoned the officials. Hussein

Pasha, hated of the people, and to whose sloth an
the dangerous position of Sennâr and Berber was
already been dismissed and was on the way to C
evident that there would be no delay in making
would be popular. Colonel Coetlogon Pasha was w veri
of the city, though afterwards Gordon found it u essary
retain him at Khartûm, where he had been so long ut up; ar
therefore sent him to Cairo some time afterwards, as retention
as a military officer appeared to be superfluous and ere was no
other appointment open to hi

Immediately after summo rdon held a levee
at the mudirieh, to which the v on, even to the poorest
Arab, were admitted. On his v th the people came around
him again, kissing his hands and feet, a l greeting him as father
and sultan. General Gordon and C onel Stewart immediately
opened offices in the palace, where anyone having a grievance
would find admittance and be heard patiently. The former plan
of a great box for petitions was afterwards renewed.

But the first day's demonstrations were not completed till the governor-general had redeemed his word as to the cancelling of arrears of taxation. The government books, containing the records (many of them extending to a remote period) of outstanding debts of the oppressed people, were publicly burnt in front of the palace, and with them those lesser instruments of torture, the kourbashes, whips, and other implements used to inflict punishment or to terrorize. The evidence of debts and the emblems of oppression perished together.

In the afternoon General Gordon created a council of the local notables, all Arabs. Then he visited the hospital and arsenal. With Colonel Stewart, Coetlogon Pasha, and the English consul, he visited the prison, and found it to be a dreadful den of misery. Two hundred wretches loaded with chains lay there. They were of all ages, boys and old men, some having never been tried, some having been proved innocent, but forgotten for over six months, some arrested on suspicion and detained there more than three years, many merely prisoners of war, and one a woman, who had

spent fifteen years in the prison for a crime committed when she was a girl.

At night the town was brilliantly illuminated, the bazaar was hung with gay cloth and lighted with coloured lamps, the priests' houses were decorated, and there was a grand display of fireworks by the negro population. Afesh Bey Shilook, a negro who had won the Legion of Honour under Bazaine in Mexico, was made a commandant of troops remaining in Khartûm. It was then decided that all the white troops should go to Omdurman, on the other side of the White Nile, and should be sent down the river in detachments, with their families and the Europeans who desired to go; and that the Soudanese should stay in Khartûm. It was thought that the conciliatory measures adopted by Gordon would keep the road perfectly open and maintain quiet in Khartûm till everything could be settled and the place given up to the Soudanese under a regular government. The proclamations were hailed with delight as the only means of saving the garrison. Egyptians and Europeans (the latter principally Greeks) professed to have the greatest confidence in him and his measures, as they foresaw that useless loss of life would thereby be prevented, and it was believed that the recognition of the Mahdi as ruler of Kordofan would prevent him from advancing on Khartûm.

Colonel Wylde, who had been to the Abyssinian frontier, reported that the country there was quiet, and the people of the territory round the frontier near Kassala were still loyal to the khedive; but the loyal tribes had been neither protected nor strengthened, Kassala itself was besieged from the north by the followers of Osman Digma, and the camel-drivers conveying goods from Suakim, Berber, and Kassala to Massowa were asking for protection, as the Massowa tribes would otherwise be compelled to join the Mahdi,—Egyptian influence was at an end, the Egyptian soldiers being regarded with contempt. The attitude of Abyssinia led to the endeavour of Admiral Hewett to conclude some negotiations with Johannes and Ras-el-Ullah, but, as we have seen, without any definite result. There continued to be great anxiety as to the possible fate of Kassala; for, as the capital

GENERAL GORDON RELEASING PRISONERS AT KHARTUM.

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BLACKIE & SON, LONDON, GLASGOW, AND EDINBURGH.

of Toka, it came next in importance to Khartûm itself, and as it was the Egyptian depôt for troops and stores on the Abyssinian frontier, it was regarded as an important military point in case of war with Abyssinia. The town was built in 1840, after the annexation of Toka to Egypt, and the defences, though useless against guns, were regarded as impregnable, the walls being of solid mud and sun-dried bricks, loopholed for musketry, and surrounded by a deep fosse. As a military centre the place was important because of its position at the end of the great plain stretching north and east, and at the foot of the Abyssinian mountains; the Kassala Mountain being an enormous perpendicular mass of granite rising to the height of several thousand feet straight up from the plain, and visible for many miles in all directions. In 1881 the number of inhabitants was computed at from 25,000 to 30,000, among whom were a few Greek and Italian merchants, but no English; and there were abundant supplies, as there were numbers of cows, sheep, and goats in the neighbourhood. Camel-breeding was extensively carried on there, and the river Gash not only supplied plenty of water but fertilized the district. This river flowed through the territory of the Basé tribe, a country which commanded the very heart of Abyssinia. The number of troops usually quartered there consisted of about 800 Nubians, but among these were some criminals exiled from Lower Egypt, and doubtless forming a treacherous element, the pesence of which was a source of weakness and danger in every place where the spread of the insurrection incited men of bad character, who had been sent for military service as a punishment, to attempt a revolt against the authorities.

Gordon found that the evils against which he had to contend in his former long and terrible conflict with the slave-hunting pashas were still rife. Hussein Pasha, then the vice-governor of Khartûm, whom he had deposed, and who had left for Cairo before the arrival of the new governor-general, was responsible for the iniquities, cruelties, and the gross injustice which had prevailed. Gordon telegraphed that the pasha should be watched and his boxes of treasure seized, for he had shamelessly abused the power

with which he had been intrusted. The brother of an influential citizen had been flogged to death under his orders; a young boy was threatened with a similar fate unless he gave some evidence which was required by the pasha for his own purposes; an old sheikh had been so cruelly bastinadoed that his feet were in a horrible condition, and he was carried into the presence of Gordon, who telegraphed to Cairo that £50 was to be stopped from Hussein's pay for the benefit of the poor old creature, who had been made a cripple for life. The day on which these events happened concluded with the burning down of the prison by Gordon's orders; and until late at night men, women, and children were dancing and leaping around the building as it fell beneath the flames.

Gordon had then heard of the attempt that was to be made to relieve Tokar, and he telegraphed to Sir E. Baring advising that the British admiral should make it known to rebel chiefs that their wrongs and grievances would be redressed if they went or sent messengers to the governor-general at Khartûm and stated their case to him; but the time had gone by for such a course to be adopted, and Sir William Hewett said, reasonably enough, that he could not ask the chiefs to leave their followers and go to meet Gordon at Khartûm, at a time when English troops were about to be sent against them. The message was, however, sent to the chiefs before General Graham commenced his campaign, but, as we have seen, it was refused.

We have already followed the narrative of events at Suakim, and the operations which concluded with the defeat of Osman Digma at Tamai, and it is therefore only necessary to resume the somewhat scanty and uncertain story of the occurrences at Khartûm and the adjoining provinces, where the first appearances were so hopeful that Gordon, and those who were with him, expected to achieve the objects of the enterprise which he had undertaken. A portion of the Egyptian garrison rapidly embarked to return to Cairo, and 2200 men were sent back down the Nile, leaving about 4000 black troops in Khartûm, and 3000 at Sennâr, which Gordon had confident hopes of being able to relieve. On the 27th of February that town was quiet and the garrison safe, and on the

same day the return of invalid soldiers for Berbe[illegible]d Ko[illegible] o commenced in earnest; and an Egyptian force of [illegible] comprising 41 officers and 1300 men, were ready to [illegible] Upper Egypt under the command of Colonel Duncan. "Rest assu you leave this place as safe as Kensington Park," said G[illegible] Colonel Coetlogon as he bade him good-bye at Khartûm.

Gordon was justified in the opinion that the danger mei Khartûm was from within, where the people had been so [illegible] that they were driven to contemplate their deliverance [illegible] Mahdi as a probable advantage. The great change in the att of the entire population, the manner in which they welcom[illegible] arrival of the governor-general, their enthusiasm when th[illegible] that he was prepared practically to carry out all and more th[illegible] promises he had made in his proclamations, the general feeli tranquillity, were sufficient to assure him that he had secured confidence. On the 19th of February Power had telegraph Sir E. Baring: "Everything is now safe here for troops a ropeans. He is giving the people more than they expected fi the Mahdi."

But there was still a great dark back-ground of doubt a dread from which Gordon could not help knowing the clouds might roll onward. Would it be possible for him to maintain his ascendency, or, at all events, could he extend his influence beyond the immediate area where he was able to make it practically felt? Even should it be possible for him to remain there after having evacuated the territory of civilians, he would be surrounded with difficulties which no European could hope permanently to overcome without being materially sustained from without; and if strong material aid could not be expected either from Egypt or from England, his retirement, even though he could succeed in pacifying the country and restoring a rule of justice and mercy in the department over which he had control, would be the signal for the advance of the Mahdi from Obeid, and the successive defeat of local chiefs or kings and their small tribes. There was no hope of forming a coalition of these chiefs except under the direction and government of a strong hand. They would be compelled to

join the hordes of the false prophet in order to secure themselves; the whole country would be left to utter anarchy, and Egypt itself would be menaced. When the Egyptian garrisons and Egyptian government were removed, and he himself would be preparing to relinquish the arduous task that he had undertaken, who would consent to administer the government of the country? Who would be there to protect the people who had acted loyally towards him, and aided him with money, service, and provisions, in the expectation that they were not to be deserted and left to the exactions and retaliations of a conquering rebel, who claimed an authority above that of khedive and sultan, and behind whom were the worst of the petty kings, whose power needed to be checked by a native authority which would be recognized and accepted even though it should be opposed to the claims and the pretensions of the false prophet?

These were the reflections that were constantly present to Gordon, and he could find no adequate solution for them except in the appointment of Zebehr. The necessity again confronted him almost at the moment he entered Khartûm, for on the 18th of February he telegraphed: "In a previous memorandum I alluded to the arrival of an epoch when whites, fellaheen, troops, civilian employés, women and children of deceased soldiers, in short the Egyptian element in the Soudan, will be removed; when we shall be face to face with the Soudan administration, and when I must withdraw from the Soudan. I have stated that to withdraw without being able to place a successor in my seat would be the signal for general anarchy throughout the country, which, though all Egyptian element was withdrawn, would be a misfortune, and inhuman. Even if I placed a man in my seat unsupported by any government, the same anarchy would ensue. Her majesty's government could, I think, without responsibility in money or men, give the commission to my successor on certain terms which I will detail hereafter.

If this solution is examined, we shall find that a somewhat analogous case exists in Afghanistan, where her majesty's government give moral support to the ameer, and go even beyond

that in giving the ameer a subsidy, which would not be needed in the present case. I distinctly state that if her majesty ment gave a commission to my successor, I recommen n subsidy nor men being given. I would select and give m- mission to some man, and promise him the moral s majesty's government, and nothing more. It may be a her majesty's government would thus be giving nominal and m support to a man who will rule over a slave state; but so Afghanistan, as also Socotra. This nomination of my su must, I think, be direct from her majesty's government.

As for the man, her majesty's government should sel above all others, namely Zebehr. He alone has the al rule the Soudan, and would be universally accepted by the **He should be made K.C.M.G., and given presents.**

**The terms of nomination should be as follows:—**

**I. Engagement not to go into Equatorial or Bahr provinces, and which I should evacuate.**

**2. Engagement not to go into Darfûr.**

**3. Engagement, on payment of £200 annually, to teleg height of Nile to Cairo.**

**4. Engagement to remain at peace with Abyssinia.**

5. Engagement not to levy duties beyond 4 per cent on imports or exports. Of course he will not have Suakim or Massowah.

6. Engagement not to pursue any one who was engaged in suppressing his son's revolt.

7. Engagement to pay the pensions granted by the Egyptian government to old employés. To the above may be added other clauses as may seem fit. P.S.—I think the decision of any council of notables for the selection of candidates for the post of my successor would be useless. Zebehr's exile at Cairo for ten years, amidst all the late events, and his mixing with Europeans, must have had great effect on his character. Zebehr's nomination, under the moral countenance of her majesty's government, would bring all merchants, European and others, back to the Soudan in a short time."

Lieutenant-colonel Stewart, who telegraphed his opinions independently at Gordon's request, declared his belief that the policy recommended would greatly facilitate their retirement from the country, and said that the Turco-Arabian view of the question was one demanding serious consideration. As to whether Zebehr Pasha was the man who should be nominated, he thought that they had hardly a sufficient knowledge of the country to be able to form an opinion; but it was probable that whoever was nominated would be accepted for a time.

Sir E. Baring, who seems to have exhibited a remarkable faculty for being converted point by point under the influence of Gordon, was by this time very much in favour of the whole proposal, though he made some particular reservations, some of which he seemed afterwards to have also relinquished. He sent to Earl Granville saying, with what seemed like a sigh of relief at the opportunity for delay: "As regards the choice of his successor, there is, as Colonel Stewart says in his telegram, no necessity to decide at once, but I believe Zebehr Pasha to be the only possible man. He undoubtedly possesses energy and ability, and has great local influence. As regards the slave-trade, I discussed the matter with General Gordon when he was in Cairo, and he fully agreed with me in thinking that Zebehr Pasha's presence or absence would not affect the question in one way or the other. I am also convinced from many things that have come to my notice that General Gordon is quite right in thinking that Zebehr Pasha's residence in Egypt has considerably modified his character. He now understands what European power is, and it is much better to have to deal with a man of this sort than with a man like the Mahdi.

I should be altogether opposed to having General Gordon and Zebehr Pasha at Khartûm together. As soon as General Gordon has arranged for the withdrawal of the garrison and the rest of the Egyptian element, he could leave Khartûm, and Zebehr Pasha might shortly afterwards start from Cairo. One of my chief reasons for allowing the interview between the two men to take place was that I wished to satisfy myself to some extent of the

sentiments entertained by Zebehr Pasha towards General Gordo... I would not on any account run the risk of putting Gen Gordon in his power.

If Zebehr Pasha is nominated, it will be very necessary t lay down in writing and in the plainest language what degree support he may expect from her majesty's government. I can recommend that he should be promised the 'moral support' her majesty's government. In the first place, he would sc understand the sense of the phrase, and, moreover, I do n he would attach importance to any support which was not m It is for her majesty's government to judge what the effec appointment would be upon public opinion in England; but for that I can see no reason why Zebehr Pasha should proclaimed ruler of the Soudan with the approbation majesty's government. It should be distinctly explained in writing that he must rely solely upon his own reso maintain his position. He might receive a n money from the Egyptian government to be munications with that government might her majesty's representative in Cairo, as General

With regard to the detailed conditions mentioned by G Gordon, I think they might form the subject of further consideration and discussion, both with General Gordon and with others in authority here. I am inclined to doubt whether such conditions would be of any use; they would probably not long be observed.

In conclusion, I may add that I have no idea whether Zebehr Pasha would accept the position which it is proposed to offer him."

There is a painful air of indecision about this. "Perhaps you might, and it would probably be for the best if you did, although, after all, it would be of very little use unless, indeed, you were to make up your mind not to do quite what is really wanted," seems to be the tone of it. This is not difficult to explain, however. Sir E. Baring was in a very awkward position: the government here knew little or nothing about the country and the imminent situation; he knew a good deal more, because he was at Cairo, and had learned something about the whole position, and was acquainted

with many of the actors in the scene. Gordon, presumably, knew a very great deal more than he and the government together, and Stewart not much less than Gordon. It was a painful position for the representative in Cairo, on whose authority alone Gordon was ordered to proceed; for Zebehr Pasha was what in sporting parlance is called a very "dark horse." It was quite uncertain whether the ex-sultan and slaveholder would take the position if it were offered him; and should he consent to do so, more serious questions still would be: What is his motive? What bonds will hold him when he is established in power at Khartûm?

That is to say, it was exceedingly doubtful whether Zebehr would consent to go to Khartûm on the nomination of General Gordon, or under any conditions of subordination, unless he first received trustworthy assurances that the value of the property of which he alleged he had been deprived would be restored to him to the extent of about £900,000. Moreover, he vehemently and categorically denied the charges brought against him, even that of having been a conspicuous slave-hunter. "I do not know how the idea has got abroad that I am a slave-dealer," he said. "Of course there was slavery in my country, and always has been, but I never sold a human being. My people serve me gladly for the love they bear me. Let anyone go into my country and ask if Zebehr ever unjustly oppressed or killed a man, woman, or child. God is my witness, and I swear to you most solemnly that the charge against me is false (the charge of inciting to rebellion). And is England afraid of a broken man like me? Can she not order me to put down slavery, and am I not forced to obey her commands? Am I a fool, if England sent me up, to go against her behests? I am a soldier, and under authority. . . . So confident am I of my people's love that I will go up alone among them, returning joyfully to my dear home, and I shall be received everywhere with the kisses of peace."

These declarations were made to a friend of Mr. Hake, the author of *The Story of Chinese Gordon*, and to other persons; but they were only examples of supreme lying—an art in which the Arabs generally excel, but in which Zebehr appears to have been

a master. A gentleman who visited him in May, 1884, afterwards wrote: "Zebehr told me, in reply to other questions which I addressed to him, that he had seen the statements published in the English newspapers of his alleged cruelty to slaves; for he had collected the papers and had all the references to himself translated into Arabic. He supposed the newspapers had been paid by the English government to write against him. I told him he was mistaken about that. It was not the government, but the English people, who had a very strong impression that he had been guilty of great cruelties, and this was the only reason why the government had been unwilling to let him go to Khartûm when urged to do so by General Gordon. Zebehr denied the accusation made against him, and asked, if we thought him so guilty, why had he not been taken to England to be tried, when he could have proved that he was innocent. The desire to be taken to England for a fair trial was evidently very strong upon Zebehr, but he objected to being kept an indefinite time under the surveillance of the authorities in Cairo."

At the time that these strong declarations of his innocence were first published he had been somewhat touched by Gordon's having just sent a request to the Egyptian government to give Zebehr £5000 as compensation for the recent unjust confiscation of part of his property in the Soudan, and he had coupled this request with another asking them to restore his goods. After this Zebehr commenced his declaration by saying that he did not believe that Gordon had ever given orders to Gessi to shoot his (Zebehr's) son, "for Gordon is a strangely merciful man. He cannot speak our language, and so is often apt to get wrong impressions; but I do not think he would have shot my son without hearing him. However, that is a thing of the past. I have forgiven him, as we all hope to be forgiven."

Assuredly there were reasons enough for the refusal to send Zebehr to Khartûm; but as almost every other proposition was refused, as it was decided that no attempt should be made either by the Indian troops or by the British troops under General Graham to open the road from Suakim to Berber, as neither

British nor Indian troops were to be sent to Wady Halfa or to Berber, as no definite proposition was ever concluded to agree with the government of the sultan for the despatch of a Turkish force to the Soudan for the purpose of suppressing the rebellion and pacificating the country, the only alternative was to place in power at Khartûm or at Berber some ruler whose influence with the people would enable him to reorganize a settled government on the old native lines. Gordon, baffled, refused, conscious that as the days went by the situation was becoming more difficult, and that it might soon be impossible either to vacate the country or to maintain any effectual opposition to the advance of the Mahdi and the spread of the insurrection, suggested every plan that occurred to him, with the apparent result that the government here, unable to comprehend the actual condition of affairs, began to fear every fresh suggestion, and to regard it as a temptation to abandon that policy of non-intervention in the Soudan which they had in effect already contradicted by the operations in the Red Sea provinces.

It should be noted, however, that Sir Evelyn Baring was no longer either reticent or uncertain. Having weighed the probable results he had come to the conclusion that the appointment of Zebehr was the only way of avoiding increased difficulties that might end in actual disaster. In a similarly frank spirit he said, in reference to the objection to sending British troops to Assouan because of the probable effects of the climate: "I have only to say, that we have undertaken the responsibility of preserving tranquillity in Egypt, and that it is impossible to execute the task without exposing our troops to whatever risks the climatic influences involve."

Gordon had quite early pointed out, that should the whole Soudan, comprising Dongola, Berber, Khartûm, Sennâr, and Kassala, be quieted, and Bogos evacuated, there would be left a large and expensive force and a diminished revenue, as hardly half the tax could be realized for a year or so. Egyptian employés and white troops would have departed, and there would be no money wherewith to pay the forces for the defence of the towns when once the £100,000 for which he had credits was exhausted. There

was no self-reliance among the wealthy people there
might be named governor would have to face the si
funds for paying the Soudan garrisons in the tow
slight hope against anarchy would, so far as Gordon could se
place 1000 Soudan troops in Khartûm, 500 in Berber, 500 in
gola, 500 in Kassala, 500 in Sennâr, or 3000 in all, costing ab
£70,000 a year. He would also place a governor or meglis
each town, hand over to him the whole administration of taxes
of government, keeping apart the £70,000 a year for the pa
of the 3000 men, and would place a supreme officer over them.
these means anarchy would be prevented, at anyrate for a
and if it did occur it would be the fault of the native governi
Should an outbreak occur, as the troops would be natives,
would be no chance of their being massacred; the only risk
be for the European commander. This was evidently reg
by Gordon as a faint kind of alternative to the proposition
appointing Zebehr, which the English ministry had negati
because they did not wish to go beyond the original instruc
which he had received. Sir E. Baring, who had telegraphe
ask Gordon whether he could suggest anyone beside Zebehr P

to succeed him at Khartûm, sent a message to Earl Granville, the conclusion of which was:—

"With regard to the wish of her majesty's government not to go beyond General Gordon's plan, as stated in his memorandum of the 22nd ultimo, I would remark that he appears to have intended merely to give a preliminary sketch of the general line of policy to be pursued. Moreover, in that memorandum he makes a specific allusion to the difficulty of providing rulers for Khartûm, Dongola, and other places where there are no old families to recall to power.

It is clear that her majesty's government cannot afford moral or material support to General Gordon's successor as ruler of the Soudan, but the question of whether or not he should be nominally appointed by the authority of her majesty's government appears to me to be one of very slight practical importance.

Whatever may be said to the contrary, her majesty's government must in reality be responsible for any arrangements which are

now devised for the Soudan, and I do not think it is possible to shake off that responsibility.

If, however, her majesty's government are unwilling to assume any responsibility in the matter, then I think they should give full liberty of action to General Gordon and the khedive's government to do what seems best to them.

I have no doubt as to the most advisable course of action. Zebehr Pasha should be permitted to succeed General Gordon. He should receive a certain sum of money to begin with, and an annual subsidy of about £50,000 for the first five years, to depend upon his good behaviour. This amount would enable him to maintain a moderate-sized army, and the whole arrangement would be an economical one for the Egyptian government.

The main difficulty lies in the selection of the man. It is useless to send any one who has no local influence. There are certain obvious objections to Zebehr Pasha, but I think too great weight is attached to them, and I believe that General Gordon is quite right when he says that Zebehr Pasha is the only possible man. I can suggest none other, and Nubar Pasha is strongly in favour of him.

It is for her majesty's government to judge of the importance to be attached to public opinion in England, but I venture to think that any attempt to settle Egyptian questions by the light of English popular feeling is sure to be productive of harm, and in this, as in other cases, it would be preferable to follow the advice of the responsible authorities on the spot."

Yes. In reply to the question whether he could suggest any one else, as the government would not have Zebehr, Gordon had replied: "That settles the question for me, I cannot suggest any other." At that time (February 26th) Gordon thought it would not be difficult to "smash the Mahdi," and was, perhaps, scarcely aware of the dimensions of the revolt in the Red Sea provinces. "Of course," he said, "my duty is evacuation, and the best I can for establishing a quiet government. The first I hope to accomplish. The second is a more difficult task, and concerns Egypt more than me. If Egypt is to be quiet Mahdi must be smashed up. Madhi is most unpopular, and with care and time could be

smashed. Remember that once Khartûm belongs to Mahdi, the task will be far more difficult; yet you will, for safety of Egypt, execute it. If you decide on smashing Mahdi then send up another £100,000, and send up 200 Indian troops to Wady Halfa, and send officer up to Dongola under pretence to look out quarters for troops. Leave Suakim and Massowah alone. I repeat that evacuation is possible, but you will feel effect in Egypt, and will be forced to enter into a far more serious affair in order to guard Egypt. At present, it would be comparatively easy to destroy Mahdi."

We have already noted the reasonable considerations which caused the government to differ from Gordon, Stewart, and Baring, as to the employment of Zebehr, and his restoration to authority, and these objections were emphatically stated by Earl Granville; but events thickened fast, and Gordon repeatedly urged that every day made it more imperative that some steps should be taken to provide for the settlement of the government when the time came for him to retire; and, before retiring, he could place a man like Zebehr in authority. The imminent danger was that the advance of the rebellion might make it more and more difficult even for Zebehr to take the control, and that unless some steps were taken to provide for a strong government it might, and probably would, be impossible to fulfil the first part of the commission with which Gordon had been intrusted. Kassala, Sennâr, Berber, would soon be in jeopardy unless some kind of aid were sent; and as neither a British nor an Indian force was to be suffered to make such a demonstration as might in itself aid in putting an end to the increasing desertion of the soldiers and the half-reluctant revolt of wavering tribes, and as, moreover, there seemed to be no expectation of the route being opened from Berber to Suakim, the necessity for the appointment, either by England or Egypt, of the only man who had the ability and the power to smite the rebellion, to encourage the tribal kings, and to recal the people of the Soudan to obedience to a regular government, was the only course left open.

"I see impossibility of immediate withdrawal of all Egyptian

employés, and the remedy I propose is to send up Zebehr as my successor, who would receive for a time a subsidy from the Egyptian government in order to enable him to maintain an armed force. As to Egyptian employés, I mean that I appoint men of Soudan to places which they do not care to accept for fear of compromising themselves with Mahdi, and that is my difficulty, which arises from haziness of future. This would be all over if Zebehr was here.

The combination at Khartûm of Zebehr and myself is an absolute necessity for success, and I beg you and Lord Granville to believe my certain conviction that there is not the slightest fear of our quarrelling, for Zebehr would know that the subsidy depended on my safety. To do any good we must be together, and that without delay. . . .

Believe me I am right, and do not delay. Things are not serious, although they may become so if delay occurs in sending Zebehr. My weakness is that of being foreign and Christian and peaceful; and it is only by sending Zebehr that prejudice can be removed."

Colonel Stewart was in complete accordance with this view—

"It seems evident to me that it is impossible for us to leave this country without leaving some sort of established government which will last at any rate for a time, and Zebehr is the only man who can assure that. Also that we must withdraw the Sennâr and other besieged garrisons, and here also Zebehr can greatly assist us. . . . I assure you none are more anxious to leave this country than myself and Gordon, and none more heartily approve the government's policy of evacuation. Unless, however, Zebehr is sent here, I see little probability of this policy being carried out. Every day we remain finds us more firm in the country, and causes us to incur responsibilities towards the people which it is impossible for us to overlook."

On the 5th of March Lord Granville sent a despatch to Sir E. Baring, which appeared to have a satirical intention.

"Her majesty's government would be glad to learn how you reconcile your proposal to acquiesce in such an appointment (the

appointment of Zebehr Pasha) with the prevention or discouragement of slave-hunting and the slave-trade, with the policy of complete evacuation, and with the security of Egypt. They would also wish to be informed as to the progress which has been made in extricating the garrisons, and the length of time likely to elapse before the whole or the greater part may be withdrawn. As her majesty's government require details as to each garrison, your report should be a full one, and may be sent by mail."

This is a specimen of what may be called high official snubbing; but though the refusal of the government to countenance the employment of Zebehr in the Soudan may have been well founded, the snub and the satire were weak. Neither Gordon nor Baring could pretend to reconcile the proposal with their opinions of the character of the man, nor with what was known of his former conduct and what Gordon himself had said of it. Zebehr had been sentenced to death, and was still detained a prisoner under surveillance in Cairo; but he had been employed in an important crisis in the Russo-Turkish war, and his faults and crimes were such as did not single him out as the greatest of all villains in a country where Raouf Pasha and others had been sentenced and afterwards restored to high office. It is true that in former instances, notably in that of the slave-dealer Abu Saoud, Gordon's plan of endeavouring to turn enemies into friends by conciliations had not been invariably successful; but here was a case in which he could only say, I retract nothing that I said of the character of Zebehr; I think it quite likely he is still something of a villain; very probably he and other members of his family may have had something to do with stirring up the rebellion for the very purpose of making it necessary that he should be sent to quell it. Should he do so he will have plenty to do, but he is capable. He alone of any man in Egypt and the Soudan provinces could at once grasp the situation, draw the tribes and their chiefs from the Mahdi, and, if it were made well worth his while, cause the slave-trade to die out by putting an end to the raids upon the villages, forbidding the passage of caravans, and so ending slave-hunting. My urgent requests that Zebehr may be sent are not at all

consistent, Gordon might have said, but they arise from my conviction that circumstances which now menace the country and will prevent me from completing the work I came here to accomplish, make it necessary to be inconsistent rather than to obstinately adhere to what may appear to be the reasonable deductions from my former declarations.

Might not Gordon and Baring have retorted on Lord Granville's sarcasm by asking him how the government could reconcile their recent action at Suakim and the Red Sea territory with the reiterated assurances that they could never consent to aid the khedive in defending or reconquering the Soudan? The unforeseen had to that extent superseded the foreseen policy; and there was no absolute consistency anywhere, except with the Mahdi, who refused to abate a jot of his pretensions, and with Zebehr, who waited to know what would be the price for his services if he were asked and consented to go to the Soudan.

But Gordon replied soberly and seriously to the satirical despatch by a long telegram, dated from Khartûm, on the 8th of March. The sending of Zebehr, he said, meant the extrication of the Cairo employés from Khartûm and the garrisons from Sennâr and Kassala. "I can see no possible way to do so except through him, who, being a native of the country, can rally the well-affected round him, as they know he will make his home here. I do not think that the giving a subsidy to Zebehr for some two years would be in contradiction to the policy of entire evacuation. It would be nothing more than giving him a lump sum in two instalments under the conditions I have already written.

As for slave-holding, even had we held the Soudan, we could never have interfered with it. I have already said that the treaty of 1877 was an impossible one; therefore, on that head, Zebehr's appointment would make no difference whatever. As for slave-hunting, the evacuation of the Bahr Gazelle and Equatorial provinces would entirely prevent it. Should Zebehr attempt, after his two years' subsidy was paid him, to take those districts, we could put pressure on him at Suakim, which will remain in our

hands. I feel sure that Zebehr will be so occ[illegible] with Soudan proper, and with consolidating his positi[illegible] not have time to devote to those provinces.

As for the security of Egypt, Zebehr's stay in Cairo has taught him our power, and he would never dream of doing anything against Egypt. He would rather seek its closest alliance, for he is a great trader. As to progress made in extrication of garrisons, all I have done is to send down from Khartûm all the sick [illegible], women, and children of those killed in Kordofan. Sennâr, I h[illegible]d to-day, is quite safe and quiet. Kassala will hold out v[illegible] difficulty after Graham's victory, but the road there is blocked, [illegible] also is the road to Sennâr. It is quite impossible to get the ro[illegible] open to Kassala and Sennâr, or to send down the white tr[illegible] unless Zebehr comes up. He will change the whole stat[illegible] affairs. As for the Equatorial and Bahr Gazelle provinces they are all right; but I cannot evacuate them till the Nile rises, in about two months. Dongola and Berber are quiet; but I fear for the road between Berber and Khartûm, where the friends of the Mahdi are very active. A body of rebels on the Blue Nile are blockading a force of 1000 men, who have, however, plenty of food; till the Nile rises I cannot relieve them. Darfûr, so far as I can understand, is all right, and the restored sultan should be now working up the tribes to acknowledge him.

It is impossible to find any other man but Zebehr for governing Khartûm. No one has his power. Hussein Pasha Khaleefa has only power at Dongola and Berber. If you do not send Zebehr you have no chance of getting the garrisons away; this is a heavy argument in favour of sending him. There is no possibility of dividing the country between Zebehr and other chiefs; none of the latter could stand for a day against the Mahdi's agents, and Hussein Pasha Khaleefa would also fall. The chiefs will not collect here, for the loyal are defending their lands against the disloyal. There is not the least chance of Zebehr making common cause with the Mahdi. Zebehr here would be far more powerful than the Mahdi, and he would make short work of the Mahdi. The Mahdi's power is that of a pope, Zebehr's will be that of a

sultan. They could never combine. Zebehr is fifty times the Mahdi's match. He is also of good family, well known, and fitted to be sultan; the Mahdi, in all these respects, is the exact opposite, besides being a fanatic. I daresay Zebehr, who hates the tribes, did stir up the fires of revolt, in hopes that he would be sent to quell it. It is the irony of fate that he will get his wish if he is sent up."

This telegram gives a distinct impression of the condition of affairs at that date; and the fears then expressed were soon to be more than realized. This, however, did not prove that the opinion of the government and their subsequent refusal to send Zebehr could not be defended, even though Stewart and Baring both agreed with Gordon.

"I think," said Sir E. Baring, "that the policy of sending Zebehr Pasha to Khartûm and giving him a subsidy is in harmony with the policy of evacuation. It is in principle the same policy as that adopted by the government of India towards Afghanistan and the tribes on the north-west frontier. I have always contemplated making some arrangements for the future government of the Soudan, as will be seen from my despatch of the 22d December, 1883, in which I said that it would be 'necessary to send an English officer of high authority to Khartûm with full powers to withdraw all garrisons in the Soudan and make the best arrangements possible for the future government of that country.'

As regards slavery, it may certainly receive a stimulus from the abandonment of the Soudan by Egypt, but the despatch of Zebehr Pasha to Khartûm will not affect the question in one way or the other. No middle course is possible as far as the Soudan is concerned. We must either virtually annex the country, which is out of the question, or else we must accept the inevitable consequences of the policy of abandonment.

Your lordship will see what General Gordon says about the question of the security of Egypt. I believe that Zebehr Pasha may be made a bulwark against the approach of the Mahdi. Of course there is a risk that he will constitute a danger to Egypt, but this risk is, I think, a small one, and it is in any case preferable to

incur it rather than to face the certain disadvantages of withdrawing without making any provision for the future government of the country, which would thus be sure to fall under the power of the Madhi."

This opinion was endorsed by other good authorities who were well acquainted with the condition of the country and with the probable effect of Zebehr's appointment; but public opinion in England was certainly against it, and the opposition in parliament, having learned what was proposed, and concluding that the ministry was undecided whether to countenance the appointment of Zebehr or not, began to make use of the rumour for the purpose of taunting the government with adopting a policy of reticence, not only because they had no other policy, but because they contemplated the employment in high office of a man whose character made any co-operation with him disgraceful if not actually criminal. It was only a sense of the high character and entirely unselfish conduct of Gordon which prevented attacks being made upon him, but there was no real reaction with regard to him in public opinion, though it was thought that he might be on the brink of a serious error of judgment; and the British and Foreign Anti-slavery Society was not silent. Mr. Edmund Sturge, the chairman, wrote to Lord Granville in the name of the committee, saying:

"The antecedents of Zebehr Pasha are well known to your lordship. In the records of the devastations and murders inflicted by the slave-trade on North-eastern Africa this man has stood the foremost and the principal actor, and his career is specially marked by perfidy and crime. The committee are unanimous in the feeling that countenance in any shape of such an individual by the British government would be a degradation for England and a scandal to Europe.

The committee express no opinion on the policy of a permanent maintenance of British authority at Khartûm, but they earnestly hope that in the event of her majesty's government making an arrangement for its independent rule, the conditions will be such as shall secure the country alike from a reign of anarchy and barbarism, and from that of the slave-trader.

As yet, however, the committee are unable to believe that her majesty's government will thus stultify that anti-slavery policy which has so long been the high distinction of England, or that they will thus discharge a trust which they have undertaken on behalf of the British people and of Europe."

Early in March the position of affairs in Khartûm was, that two-thirds of the people there were terrorized by one-third, excited by the emissaries of the Mahdi, and yet Gordon's avowed business was to get Egyptian employés out of the town, a proceeding to which the two-thirds of the population strongly objected. The sick, widows, and orphans were daily sent away, but to send away the 1400 fellaheen soldiers would have been to leave the people no other course open than to send their submission to the Mahdi, so that, as Gordon said, "all the machinery of government would be caught." In effect the complete evacuation of the Soudan was impossible till the government asserted its authority. The employés, who formed the machinery of government, could not be removed, and, though it was possible at Khartûm to hold out, and force back the revolt till the sick, and widows, and helpless people had been sent away, the position would not improve by time, and when all the money had been spent only a partial vacation of the Soudan would have been effected, and anarchy would have its swing.

On the 29th of February three officers, who had escaped a month before from Kordofan, where they had served in the time of Abd-el-Kader, reached Khartûm. They reported that the Mahdi, Mohammed Ahmed, had 50,000 Bedouins and soldiers, and he could set in motion an army even of 150,000 men. His intention was, to send on his forces and surround Khartûm and cut off all communications, but on hearing of Gordon's arrival he countermanded the advance, though he still held his troops in readiness. He had no idea of going himself to Khartûm, but wished to send forward the Bedouins under chiefs chosen by him, and had placed his soldiers under the orders of Bedouin sheikhs whom he had selected. He had exiled the military officers, and given them over to the Bedouins for slaves, an act which was attributed to his fear of them.

On the arrival of Hicks Pasha near Kordofa three officers were in irons, but after Hicks's d released and put under surveillance.

According to such intelligence as could b position of the Madhi was not an easy one. He d no government; his disregard of some of the observar es comr by the Moslem law, and particularly his havin exceede number of wives permitted to a prophet, had shaken the con ıce of some of his followers, and he had begun to act with the sev of a usurper, making exactions which were causing some feeli of resentment.

Whether these repo true or not, Gordon had no opportunity of availing h s of any supposed loss of prestige on the part of the false prop . ı the 1st of March he had plainly stated that it was imposs e get Cairo employés out of Khartûm without help from the g vernment. "They refuse Zebehr, and are quite right (may be) to do so, but it was the only chance. It is scarcely worth while saying more on the subject. I will do my best to carry out my instructions, but I feel conviction I shall be caught in Khartûm." Caught in Khartûm! The city where he had formerly suffered so much; the graveyard for Europeans, except those who are exceptionally constituted; a pestilent place in the rainy season, when even among the natives the mortality is very considerable. Yet it is a large and important city, with a spacious market-place, ample bazaars, and above 3000 houses, amongst which are many great substantial dwellings, commodious if not architecturally attractive, and in the healthy season not unpleasantly situated. The Austrian Roman Catholic mission was formerly one of the most important institutions in the place. It was supported by widely extended contributions, and the buildings occupied a considerable space, surrounded by a solid wall, which inclosed beautiful gardens containing palm, orange, and fig trees, pomegranates and bananas. The buildings included a massive cathedral and a hospital, beside the dwellings of the missionaries.

Would the government after all consent to send Zebehr to

Gordon at Khartûm? Would the order be given for the British troops who had defeated Osman Digma to open the route from Suakim to Berber? These were the questions that were being asked by Gordon at Khartûm, by officials at Cairo, and by excited inquirers in England both in and out of parliament. The answer in each case was "no." Even if the members of the government had been willing to forego their own convictions and to yield to the urgent and repeated declarations of Gordon himself, they would have found themselves in opposition to the prevalent voice of the country, and would have been denounced by their political rivals. "We cannot give back to barbarism that which has been won for civilization," said Lord Salisbury in March, at the time that the cabinet was seriously and finally considering whether it would be possible to comply with Gordon's demand, supported by the explanation that he made of the restrictions that might be placed on the government of the Soudan provinces by Zebehr. Lord Salisbury was in accord with the opinion of the ministry at that time. There were some evidences that Mr. Gladstone was in advance of many of his colleagues in the desire to leave Gordon free to act on his own conclusions, even to the extent of agreeing to the appointment of Zebehr; but the public voice and the voices of the opponents of the slave-trade, who evidently did not completely grasp the situation, were against it. Nor was their opposition unreasonable. The doubts whether Gordon might after all have been mistaken in the degree of turpitude of which he had formerly accused the rebellious and slave-hunting pasha, were cleared up by a communication to the *Times* by Mr. A. Egmont Hake, Gordon's own biographer, in answer to a letter from a Cairo correspondent to the leading journal, which suggested that Gordon might have denounced Zebehr on partial evidence, and dwelt on the fact that Gordon had not produced the letter proving the complicity of Zebehr in the revolt for which his son was executed. Mr. Hake wrote: "The letter referred to could not be produced, for the simple reason that it was not in General Gordon's hands. I have now that very letter before me, together with a number of other Arabic documents bearing on the revolt in the

Bahr al Ghazal, which clearly prove Zebehr's complicity. The letter was read during the proceedings of the Maylis (court of inquiry or court-martial), and is referred to in the official report, also before me, in the following terms:—

'A letter was also read from Zebehr Pasha to his son Souleyman, inciting him to rebel and to levy war against the government, and urging him to expel, by force of arms, Idris Ben Abtar, governor of Bahr al Ghazal; desiring him also to seek the means of combining with Awad Bey, for the sake of his assistance in seizing the country, seeing that he is one of its inhabitants, and is well acquainted with all its affairs, the language of the people, &c. The letter goes on to say that, whereas the agents who were left in charge (by Zebehr) of his zaribas had left their employment and had taken service under the government, he therefore desired his son Souleyman to receive (or take possession of) Shaka from Said ail Haseyn.' A letter was also read during the sitting from Ramli son of Souleyman, to Souleyman son of Zebehr, informing the latter that he had received 1000 okka of gunpowder from Zebehr, asking for instructions, and stating that it was meanwhile buried underground.

The documents which are in my possession consist of a memoir of Zebehr, written in Arabic by General Gordon's command; of Zebehr's letters to his wife, his son, and to his accomplice Awad, all seized by General Gordon during his campaign against the slave-dealers; and of the report already referred to. These documents place beyond a doubt the fact that Zebehr, while a prisoner at Cairo, was busy in plotting for the revolt which took place in 1879, and which caused so much anxiety to General Gordon and his lieutenants."

The government had not then given their final explanations to Gordon of the reasons which prevented them from sanctioning the appointment of Zebehr; and therefore the question was still not altogether closed. The other question, of sending aid in some form, was more immediately agitated.

The expectation at Khartûm was, that the road between Suakim and Berber would be opened up in accordance with the declaration

of Gordon, that cavalry should be pushed towards Berber. The duty would have been a difficult one, no doubt. Any force sent to perform it would have had to contend with hardships from climate, and probably with repeated and sudden attacks from the Arabs; but the tribes under Osman Digma had been driven away; the difficulties were not insuperable, and in the result the refusal promptly to follow up the success achieved by General Graham, and to send a sufficient expedition to open the road to Berber, probably led to the subsequent necessity for the far more difficult, costly, and futile expedition for the rescue of Gordon.

It is not easy to compute the method by which the government arrived at the conclusion that they were precluded from employing British troops to clear the route to Berber, though they regarded it as a clear and obvious duty, not only to hold Suakim, but to send forth a sufficient force to drive away the hostile tribes who would have invested it. Mr. Gladstone distinctly recognized that it was the duty of the government to employ the troops which protected Suakim to make war upon the tribes which endeavoured to hold the adjacent country, and that to defeat them and drive them to a distance where they would not be dangerous to the territory was a part of the reason for our occupying the place; but the government appeared to think all duties should be confined to this portion of the Soudan. One can scarcely wonder that Gordon could not perceive the logic employed in arriving at such a conclusion, and that he supposed the troops employed to relieve the Soudan provinces on the borders of the Red Sea might, without any violent inconsistency, continue their operations by opening the regular communications between that part of the country and Berber, so that the evacuation of the garrisons in the south and the relief of Khartûm, where he was shut up waiting for some kind of aid, might be accomplished with the speed which was deemed so desirable. He wanted a small force sent on to Berber, and a few troops sent up the Nile to Wady Halfa, and supported by Sir Evelyn Wood's army, but he was to have neither.

On the 7th of March an emissary of the Mahdi was at Shendy, between Berber and Khartûm, stirring up the people there

A DERVISH PREACHING THE HOLY WAR.

BLACKIE & SON: LONDON, GLASGOW, AND EDINBURGH.

to revolt; and Gordon then stated his views of the situation:—"There is nothing," he says, "further to be hoped for in the way of quieting the people than has already been accomplished, and there is a certainty that as time advances the emissaries of the Mahdi will succeed in raising the tribes between this and Berber. This is not owing to disaffection, but to fear caused by the pronounced policy of the abandonment of the Soudan, which policy has been published by sending down the widows and orphans and the Cairo employés from Khartûm. We cannot blame them for rising when no definite sign is shown of establishing a permanent government here. Except by means of emissaries the Mahdi has no power outside of El Obeid, where he distrusts the people and also the Bedouins around. He is a nonentity as to any advance on Khartûm, but all-powerful through his emissaries when backed with the pronounced policy of abandonment without establishing a permanent government.

General Graham's victory is a glorious one, and if followed up by an advance of about two squadrons to Berber would settle the question as to this place, for the people between there and Khartûm would not think of rising. Zebehr Pasha should be sent to succeed me. With these squadrons and Wood's Invincibles, should advance a regiment, or it should go to Dongola, while 100 British troops might make a Nile trip to Wady Halfa and stay there for two months. This would settle the question, for when the Nile rose, with the Berber black troops and those of Khartûm, which I would bring up, I could deal with the rebels on the Blue Nile and open the road to Sennâr. Then I would take out the Cairo employés, and Zebehr Pasha would put his own men there. I would evacuate the Equatorial Bahr Gazelle provinces, and hand over the troops to Zebehr Pasha, who would before the end of the year finish off the Madhi.

As for Zebehr Pasha's blood-feud with me, it is absurd, if a subsidy be granted him for three years dependent on my safety. As for Zebehr's slave-dealing offences, they are bad, but not worse than those of Ismail and other Turks, for the thief is no worse than the receiver.

Be sure of one thing. If her majesty's government do not act promptly General Graham's victory will go for naught, and with the useless expenditure of blood the effect of it will evaporate. I do not believe we shall send any more telegraphs, for it is no longer a question of days, but of hours.

I am dead against the sending of any British expedition to reconquer the Soudan. It is unnecessary. I would not have a single life lost. It is my firm conviction that none would be lost by the plan I propose, and our honour would be saved. I like the people in rebellion as much as those who are not, and I thank God that, so far as I am concerned, no man has gone before his Maker prematurely through me."

He could not abandon the opinion that the only, or, at all events, the best thing that could be done was to send Zebehr in accordance with his previous plan; but on the 6th of March, when the government were still considering the possibility of consenting to this proposal, he telegraphed to Sir E. Baring: "Be assured that whatever is decided by her majesty's government *in re* Zebehr, I honestly accept it as I should look on it as ruled by a higher power, and it will be sure to come right. As I have been inconsistent about Zebehr it is my fault, and I should bear the blame if Zebehr is sent, and should put up with inconvenience if he is not."

It need scarcely be said, that while the question of Zebehr was supposed not to be absolutely settled, and Lord Granville was asking questions of Sir E. Baring by telegram respecting what were the precise powers which Gordon would recommend to be given to his successor, the position of Gordon himself was one of increasing uncertainty and anxiety. The road to Berber was threatened to be cut, and it would be necessary, if Stewart had to retreat to Egypt conveying the Cairo employés and white troops, he would have to go from Berber across to Merawi, where the river was navigable to Hannek, north of Dongola, where there was a steamer on the strip of water, and thence there would be no danger for the travellers to Egypt, if Sir E. Wood sent 2000 troops to Dongola to convey them. This was one of the frustrated

plans, and it was necessary to do something, for the European consuls were asking Gordon if Khartûm was menaced, and whether he could help them to go to Berber. The very fact of these Europeans leaving would be significant evidence to the people of the town and the provinces that no assistance was likely to arrive. Gordon asked Sir E. Baring what he would recommend him to say in order to neutralize the ill effects of their departure, and added, "You know exactly the position of the garrisons, so far as I can explain it, and that there is no probability of the people rallying round me, or of paying any attention to my proclamation." Such was the change that had occurred in the aspect of affairs in less than three weeks. It was no longer worth while to hold on to Khartûm, unless a diversion of British troops to Berber were to be made, or the proposal to appoint Zebehr were accepted. It would be impossible for Gordon to help the other garrisons, and he would only be sacrificing the troops and employés at Khartûm; he therefore urged that he should be instructed at once whether he should evacuate Khartûm, and with all the troops and employés remove the seat of government to Berber, necessarily sacrificing all outlying places except Berber and Dongola. A prompt reply was necessary, as even the retreat to Berber might not be in his power in a few days, and would be difficult even if carried out at once, so difficult that he would have to leave large stores, and nine steamers, which could not go down, and as he might utterly fail in getting the Cairo employés to Berber, because of questions that might arise there and at Dongola, he could only be responsible for the *attempt* to accomplish it, while, if once the Mahdi got into Khartûm, operations against him would be very arduous, and could not serve Sennâr and Kassala. If the immediate evacuation of Khartûm were determined upon irrespective of outlying towns, Gordon proposed to send down all the Cairo employés and white troops to Berber with Colonel Stewart, who would there await the orders of the government. Gordon would at the same time resign his own commission. He would then take all steamers and stores up to the Equatorial and Bahr Gazelle provinces, and consider those provinces to be under the King of the Belgians.

The troops and employés with Stewart would then be able to retire from Berber to Dongola, and thence to Wady Halfa. The sending up of Zebehr he regarded as inseparable from a British diversion at Berber, as the delay had diminished the value of Zebehr's appointment, the tribes taking up the cause of the Mahdi and involving themselves with him. The recent exodus of the sick, and the widows and orphans, had not reassured the wavering tribes between Khartûm and Berber; no promise for the future could be assured to the people, and it was evident that no one would throw in his fortunes with a departing government.

This was the state of affairs on the 10th of March; and Gordon, still hoping that some aid might come, told Hussein Khalif Pasha, should the telegraph line be cut, to send scouts out and himself to meet, at Obak, the forces that might be advancing from Suakim. Gordon also detailed three steamers which could pass the cataract to remain at Berber, or if any force arrived from Suakim Hussein was to send up all the black troops at Berber to Khartûm, and the white troops there would be sent down to Berber.

Sir E. Baring telegraphed to Lord Granville on the 13th of March, in answer to government inquiries, that the successor to General Gordon would certainly have jurisdiction over the province of Sennâr, and the valley of the Nile from Khartûm to Wady Halfa. As regarded the Eastern Soudan, that is, the country between the Nile and the Red Sea, there would be no objection to its being handed over to him, but it was impossible to say with any certainty at present whether he would find it possible to assert any real authority over the tribes of the Bishareen and Hadendowa. Of course, no portion of the Red Sea coast would come under his rule, and Kordofan would fall either to the Mahdi or to the ruler of Khartûm, whichever proved himself to be the stronger.

The ruler at Khartûm would have no jurisdiction over Darfûr, the Bahr Gazelle, or the Equatorial province. This was one of the conditions which General Gordon proposed to impose on Zebehr Pasha, as was shown by his message of the 18th February.

Slave-hunting could only take place in a non-Moslem country; the exclusion of the Bahr Gazelle and the Equatorial provinces

from the jurisdiction of the new ruler would therefore deprive him of all the slave-hunting grounds. As regards the slave-trade, the sale of slaves from one family to another would, of course, continue in the Soudan, where under no circumstances could the convention of 1877 have been enforced. As a consequence of the abandonment of the Soudan, there might be some danger of an increase in the export of such slaves as already existed there.

To meet this danger, increased watchfulness would be necessary on the Red Sea coast and on the southern frontier of Egypt.

In answer to this the message from the foreign office referring to General Gordon's suggestions with regard to the appointment of Zebehr Pasha as governor of Khartûm and the despatch of British troops to Berber said:—"Her majesty's government are unable to accept these proposals. If General Gordon is of opinion that the prospect of his early departure diminishes the chance of accomplishing his task, and that by staying at Khartûm himself for any length of time which he may judge necessary he would be able to establish a settled government at that place, he is at liberty to remain there.

In the event of his being unable to carry out this suggestion, he should evacuate Khartûm, and save that garrison by conducting it himself to Berber without delay.

Her majesty's government trust that General Gordon will not resign his commission

He should act according to his judgment as to the best course to pursue with regard to the steam-vessels and stores."

This was another of the regulation official blood-curdlers, and it may be presumed that Gordon felt it, even with his experiences of the foreign office; but he had other work before him. He was now shut up—"trapped in Khartûm"—he and the garrisons;—and though he had not commenced or provoked hostilities, had not, in fact, fired a shot or made a menace, fighting was on hand, and he was not altogether unprepared for it. It would have been difficult to have taken Gordon unaware, for his readiness was equal to his fertility of resource and his professional skill as a commander and a military engineer.

It is of some importance to remember that Gordon did not commence hostilities against the rebels. He knew that fighting would come, but he loyally regarded his first business to be that of taking means to get the people out of the country, and afterwards to restore a regular government. But he had to make such preparations as he could to defend the city against the Mahdi's followers, and to aid other places in the province as far as possible. His engineering skill was brought into practice, and he had to provide, not only for the regular defence of the city, but for frequent and constant naval reconnoitre on the Nile. He had had considerable experience during his former residence in the Soudan and at Khartûm, and knew how to convert an ordinary small steamer into a fortified vessel. He now had twelve or fourteen steamers and a large number of boats, or rather barges, and he added to the defence of the steamers by casing them with baulks or planks of timber. The barges, which were towed by the steamers, were full of troops, and from high wooden turrets or platforms constructed on the vessels the marksmen could rake the Nile banks with the fire of their rifles, and harass the enemy at a considerable distance from the river. It was a considerable flotilla which swept the Nile northward and southward, capturing grain and stores from the rebels, dispersing their camps, and exploding their forts with the fire of two or three guns which were carried in the expeditions. These operations came later, however, when active hostilities were necessary. When the first excursions were made they were for the purpose of reconnoitring, and not a shot was fired.

On the 29th of February Colonel Stewart and Mr. Power went on the first of these excursions up the White Nile; the party being conveyed in two steamers, each with a thick breastwork of biscuit sacks, and each vessel carrying one gun with 110 Soudani soldiers carrying large white flags. The object of the excursion was to visit the villages and explain the proclamations. At each village Stewart stopped and interviewed the sheikhs, to inform them of Gordon's policy of restoring peace to the country. The villages on both banks were quiet for about thirty miles, and

the people were friendly; but at a place farther still, where the expedition arrived in the evening, and sent ten white flags ashore on the Kordofan side, the villagers fled. One man afterwards came, and to him the proclamations were read; and Hassan Bey swore on the Koran that if the people went to the steamers they would not be injured. Six went on board, and all declared for peace, and promised to return next morning bringing with them the sheikhs, to whom they carried letters containing promises of peace. On preparing to send a boat on shore in the morning to fetch the sheikhs, however, large numbers of people were seen to be on the banks with banners, spears, and rifles, waving lances, beating drums, and (those who were on horseback) galloping and prancing their steeds. They were said to belong to the Baggaras, and would not respond to the friendly signs that were made to them; so the steamers pursued the journey twenty miles further, to the village of Sheikh Tuk Ibrahim, where there were about 1500 armed men drawn up with a large body of cavalry, evidently prepared to oppose the landing of the expedition. They did not fire on the steamers, but would not respond to the pacific signals with the white flags; and Colonel Stewart therefore gave the order to return, as the limit of time named by General Gordon had expired. On returning Colonel Stewart held a meeting on the eastern bank, where a large number of sheikhs were present. Here he learned that Tuk Ibrahim had recently returned from El Obeid with a firman from the "Mahdi" making him chief of the other bank, and authorizing him to levy a host of followers to prevent any landing, but not to cross the river.

Another reconnaissance on the White Nile was made two days afterwards, when Colonel Stewart again issued the proclamations of peace, and again no hostile demonstration was made on either side; but it was said that a shot was fired at a steamer on the way from Khartûm to Shendy, about an hour's journey from Khartûm. A week afterwards telegraphic communication became uncertain; the tribes on the right bank of the Nile between Khartûm and Shendy were friendly, and that for the time prevented the advance of the Sheikh el Obeid to the Nile, so that Gordon hoped to

preserve the telegraph and communication to Berber, especially as he had built a strong fortified camp on the opposite side of the Blue Nile, and stationed a force there to check the sheikh from going further north on the line of communications.

The assault on Khartûm may then be said to have commenced. The followers of the Mahdi were advancing upon it in numbers, and Gordon prepared for defending it as well as possible; among the defences being tangles of wire spread upon the ground at certain points, where they would catch the feet of intending assailants coming up for a night attack.

The actual struggle began at Halfiyeh, a small town some miles north of Khartûm, the capital of the district of Halfiyeh, extending along a portion of the Blue Nile and the main Nile. This district, formerly subject to Sennâr, had become independent when Ismail Pasha annexed Nubia. Halfiyeh was the most important town, with 15,000 inhabitants, and the king (Melek) had his court there. It was a busy place, because of its famous salt-mines and the continual passage of caravans; and the kings of Halfiyeh and Shendy could together put into the field 30,000 men splendidly mounted. That had all been put an end to by the cessation of commerce, and the destruction brought upon the country by the Egyptian rule.

Halfiyeh was held by about 800 men of the Shaggiehs (Shaiqies), who had remained loyal, and to whom Gordon had given arms. These men were shut up in Halfiyeh by about 4000 rebels, who had surrounded the place, blocked the line of communication by steamer, and fired on one vessel which attempted to pass, wounding three soldiers. This steamer was sent to reconnoitre the rebels, as there were some rumours (afterwards found incorrect) that the men at Halfiyeh of the irregular troops were not to be depended on. "The steamer returned the fire," said General Gordon in his report, "and is said to have killed 35 rebels. Divide this by 7 and you will probably get the correct number."

General Gordon determined to attack tne rebels at Halfiyeh on the following Saturday morning, as Friday was thought to be

an unlucky day. The attack was to be made from three sides, one from that of Khartûm, one from that of the beleaguered garrison, and one from armed steamers. The rebels had intrenched themselves along the river bank, being thus enabled to fire with impunity on passing steamers, and it was necessary to dislodge them. This assemblage of rebels had not apparently interfered with the forwarding of supplies to the town market. One hundred camels, carrying food, arrived at Khartûm. This was above the usual daily number, and Mr. Power said in his telegram, that Gordon had told him the fact showed that the people would not rise unless they were egged on by some malcontents. They would be quiet if they believed the government had any backbone.

"Provided that no influence be brought to bear from without," said Gordon, "the loss of an action will not involve immediate danger to Khartûm. The only justification for assuming the offensive against these poor unfortunate peasants is derived from the law of self-defence, and the duty of the extrication of the men beleaguered in Halfiyeh. But for this, it is questionable whether we ought to shoot down those whose reason for rebellion is fidelity to the only person whom they can see as their coming governor in the immediate future, with the wish to preserve their possessions, the security of which cannot be guaranteed by the present provisional government."

On the evening of the 13th about 3000 rebels, horse and foot, remained drawn up under arms, with banners waving, on the right bank of the Nile opposite the palace at Khartûm, on the roof of which Gordon used frequently to keep watch hour after hour, whence he and his companions, Power, Stewart, and Herbin, could see this force, and when night fell could trace their position by their watch-fires. At three o'clock next morning there was a heavy sound of rifle-firing, and the flashes of the guns of the insurgents could be seen from the palace roof. The firing continued till daybreak, when about 6000 rebels returned from the direction of the river, and drew up in four ranks, each nearly two miles long. Later in the day they commenced making huts and putting up tents amidst a great beating of drums.

The firing was discovered to have been an attack on a party of 300 of Gordon's black soldiers who had been sent down the river for firewood, and by some unaccountable negligence of the officers had been left there. These were cut off by the advance of the Arabs, and they attempted to get to Khartûm at night by means of boats. When passing Halfiyeh, they were seen by the rebels, who opened fire on them, killing several. Eight of the boats were captured, and three escaped with 150 men. In consequence of some further disgraceful negligence the steamers that should have gone to their rescue did not get under weigh for six hours after the event. They then, however, made a most successful trip, bringing back the boats and some refugees; amongst these were two of the Shaggiehs who were blockaded. Concerning these blockaded Shaggiehs there were, during the day, all kinds of contradictory reports. Some said they had gone over to the rebels, and some that they were loyal. The two returned men, however, assured Gordon of their fidelity, so it was determined to attempt to get them out, though the advance of the force of rebels on the river bank, added to the number surrounding Halfiyeh, had at first caused Gordon to hesitate, as it seemed that there would be great difficulty in any further effort than that of defending Khartûm. He had armed many of the townspeople. Hicks Pasha's defeat had not only entailed a loss of life, but had deprived General Gordon of all those who had ever shown any ability in the public departments. Therefore he had to do everything himself, and if he could succeed in extricating the garrison of Halfiyeh, that was about all he could do at the moment. With the material in his hands he could effect little or nothing against the vast mass of the enemy fronting Khartûm. "Should we even succeed in getting out the Shaggiehs from Halfiyeh, it will be about the utmost we can do beyond annoying the enemy by skirmishing," he telegraphed to Sir E. Baring. "We can do nothing against the superiority in numbers. Happily you have three steamers at Berber to help any forward movement. Should you attack, do so before break of day, and fire low. Khartûm is all right. I should not be able to help you at a greater distance

from Khartûm than Halfiyeh, and could only do so if assured of your co-operation."

It seems as though he could not believe that no help would reach him when his difficult and increasingly hopeless position was known.

Early on the Saturday morning an expedition of 1200 men was ready to start for the relief of the beleaguered force at Halfiyeh. Gordon had armed the townsmen of Khartûm, that he might take as many troops as possible for the work in hand. The men were hidden in the two large iron barges—the barges used for the transport of grain. The troops were thus out of sight of the enemy's marksmen, who were in the trenches which they had made on the bank, and from which they commanded the river owing to the lowness of the water. It will be seen how impossible it would have been for the garrison at Halfiyeh to escape without aid from a force sufficient to raise the siege. "We were bound in honour to make the attempt to extricate them however perilous a defeat might be," said Gordon; "and, *en passant*, it is curious to remark, that the general strategy in the Soudan has been mainly forced in the direction of relieving beleaguered garrisons." The barges were towed by three steamers, which had been "armoured" with boiler plates, and carried mountain-guns with wooden mantlets, and some of the troops were concealed in the holds. The expedition performed its work quickly and decisively. In a few hours the steamers and barges reappeared, having rescued 500 soldiers of the imprisoned garrison at Halfiyeh. They had raised the siege and saved the men, with the loss of only two of their own number. They had also captured 70 camels, 18 horses, and a quantity of arms. There was greater rejoicing in Khartûm than had been known there for many years, and the townspeople made a lively demonstration in honour of General Gordon, who determined to take the troops while they were in the humour and to order an attack to be made next morning on the Arab army, which was drawn up within sight of the palace windows. Something would have to be done. The whole country around Shendy was in the hands of the rebels, and Berber was threatened.

The enemy, still gathering on the banks of the Nile, continued to fire on the palace, and began seriously to harass Khartûm. For three weeks the people of the town, the troops, and the Bashi-Bazouks had been crying out to make a sortie against the rebels, and the demand grew more urgent after the victory at Halfiyeh; the general opinion being that the enemy were demoralized, and might be defeated. They were drawn up opposite the palace on the other side of the Blue Nile; their lines, being two miles long, about eight distant, and parallel to the Blue Nile, stretched from Halfiyeh to some wooded sand-hills.

On the morning of the 16th Gordon ordered a sortie to be made, and at 8 A.M. two steamers started for Halfiyeh, and the Bashi-Bazouks under their own leaders along with some regular troops advanced across the plain towards the rebels. The troops numbered about 2000, and the Bashi-Bazouks and Egyptian regulars were in a long thin line facing the enemy and also parallel to the Blue Nile, while the regulars were in square opposite the centre of the rebel position. On the left flank was a small square of regular Soudan troops with one field-gun, on the right front flank was a handful of mounted troops. The result was disastrous, and afforded another example of the utter worthlessness of Egyptian troops and the treachery of their leaders. The whole engagement could be seen from the roof of the palace, where Gordon and Power were stationed, and where Power remained to witness the scene. As the Khartûm force drew near the rebels the latter began to file away to the right of the line of the Bashi-Bazouks, and disappeared behind the sand-hills. This pretended or supposed retreat commenced at 9·40, and at 10·30 all had disappeared, the enemy's rear being covered by about 60 Arabs mounted on horses and camels. "Our line," said Power, "still advanced, and the artillery fired two shells at the retiring rebels. Our horsemen having entered the woods at the foot of the sand-hills, we saw, to our astonishment, the five principal officers of our force, who had been riding a little ahead, dash back, breaking through their own ranks.

At that moment the rebel cavalry shot out at full gallop from

behind the sand-hills on our right. Their appearance was the signal for a disgraceful *sauve qui peut* on the part of our men, who broke up and rushed back without firing a shot. The sixty horsemen, who were only armed with lances and swords, dashed about, cutting down the flying men. I saw one Arab lancer kill seven Egyptians in as many minutes. He then jumped off his horse to secure a rifle and ammunition, when a mounted Bashi-Bazouk officer cut him down. The rebel infantry now appeared, and rushed about in all directions, hacking at the men disabled by the cavalry charge. This slaughter continued for nearly two miles, our men not stopping to fire a shot. Then the Arabs halted, and an officer rallied some of our troops, and they commenced a dropping but harmless fire at the enemy, who seemed content not to advance, but treated us with the greatest contempt, some riding quietly on camels in front of our muzzles. This continued till mid-day, some of our men dropping from stray bullets fired by the Arabs. The rebels then drew off to their old position, carrying a lot of rifles and cartridges, and one mountain-piece. The irregulars, instead of returning into camp, coolly adjourned to a neighbouring friendly village opposite the palace. When they had completely looted this and killed some of the inhabitants, they strolled into camp.

I, who had seen every incident of the battle from the palace roof, crossed the river to our fort opposite. Here was a fearful scene of confusion. Men of the Egyptian regulars and Bashi-Bazouks were crying out that their two generals had betrayed them. These two worthies were among the five horsemen whom I saw break through their own lines, and were now hidden in a house, afraid to go out lest they should be murdered by their own soldiers. There is no lack of evidence that when they galloped back Said Pasha rode towards a gun and slashed through the brain the sergeant in charge, who was in the act of laying the gun. At the same time Hassan Pasha cut down two artillerymen. I then found that up to that hour, seven hours after the battle, no doctors had seen the wounded. I found them lying scattered through the tents bathed in blood, and each man with three or

four wounds—all from the sword or spear. There were only about twenty wounded, as the Arabs gave no quarter, and only left the wounded when they believed them to be dead. I doubt whether any will survive. Colonel Stewart got them on board a steamer and transferred them to the hospital. On going back to the camp I met the army surgeon in charge, who coolly informed me that there were no wounded, and was very reluctant to go to the hospital when I told him that there were.

As I write parties of Bashi-Bazouks are carrying the bodies of friends who fell near the camp. Looking from the windows here in the palace, I can see the moonlit plain dotted with white marks in all directions; each mark represents the body of some poor wretch who never had the ideas, the hopes, or the courage of a soldier, and whose only instinct was retreat. All the bodies brought into camp bear the first-inflicted wound on the back. Our loss is about 200 killed; the enemy's loss has not exceeded four. From this will be clearly seen the worthlessness of the soldiers now left in Khartûm, with which the government seems to think General Gordon can work wonders. Officers and men alike are useless as soldiers. To-day they had every advantage on their side, yet sixty horsemen without firearms signally defeated 2000 armed with the best European weapons—Remingtons, bayonets, and revolvers. So terrified were the soldiers during the retreat, that until the Arabs ceased slaying not a shot was fired, nor saw I a bayonet fixed during the day."

The whole force retreated slowly towards the fort with their rifles shouldered, the horsemen of the enemy continuing to ride along the flanks cutting off the stragglers. The men made no effort to stand—two mountain-guns were lost, one of them having been abandoned with sixty-three rounds and fifteen cases of reserved ammunition. The Bashi-Bazouks, as we have seen, streamed off to pillage an unfortunate village near Khartûm, and Gordon paid £600 compensation. The steamers which had gone to Halfiyeh to support the attack returned in safety, having done some amount of damage to the rebels.

Long afterwards, that is to say in the early part of 1885, the

story was told by another professed eye-witness to the correspondent of the *Daily News* at Korti. The narrator was a man with a bronzed "hatchet face," with a peculiarly weary and care-worn expression, and he wore the Egyptian uniform, for he asserted that he was one of the soldiers of Hicks Pasha who had been left at Khartûm—presumably with Colonel Coetlogon—where he had been through the siege and had eventually escaped. He told the story as follows:—

"We had a grand illumination the night Gordon arrived. If all Christians were like him all men would become Nazarah; but you do not follow the teachings of your own Prophet as we Mussulmans do. Gordon told us he had come to save us. The officials and Greeks illuminated their houses, and every native Soudanese, however poor, lit his lamp; but soon bad tidings came day by day of the approach of the cursed Arabs. Soon we saw them, first in small bodies at a distance, and then in large ones. They had been hovering around us a long time before the pasha arrived. Now Gordon set every man to work; he threw up a long parapet with a deep trench from the Bahr-el-Abiad to the Bahr-el-Azrek, and he built round towers on it and made one iron gate. He did not turn out Arabs from dwelling in Khartûm; there were none there, though we had many traitors. They were known to the pasha; but he said, 'Let them alone: at the end they shall be punished.' Among these was the principal baker. Gordon used to say to all who wanted to leave, 'Stay, my friends; the English are coming.' That handsome girl of sixteen, the doctor's daughter, remained; so did the German tailor, Herr Klein, and his wife and pretty daughter.

Soon after Gordon's arrival Sheik Wad-abou-Gurgy made three forts opposite Khartûm on the Bahr-el-Azrek, for the time was now at hand when we were to be beleaguered. In these he placed three cannon, for his designs were evil—he was rebellious. These forts were near the gardens of Boussi, and now he piled up outside great pyramids of dhoora, three times higher than the forts themselves. When these things were related to Gordon in the early morn (for these piles were made at night) he despatched

three steamers; these fired first ball, then shell, to knock down walls, and they succeeded. Mahomet Ali Pasha, commanding ships, ran ashore and landed troops, while shrapnel was covered to command their advance. The black soldiers then stormed the fort, while the Bashi-Bazouks took the outer circle. Many Arabs were killed, and all the dhoora captured and ammunition. After the anniversary of the birth of Mahommed, Wad Sheik El Obeid came opposite Khartûm to the other side of Bahr-el-Azrek, and encamped on this isle. Gordon Pasha sent for the troops under Hassein Abraham and Mahomet Abru Said, who had been made pashas by Gordon Pasha. Directly we landed we formed a four-deep square. Even so we marched boldly from shore. One gun is at an angle of the square. They charged us furiously; but, ha! how they scampered. Shattered was that great band of rebels. But now what I have to relate fills my heart with grief. The traitor Abraham takes off his tarbash, puts it in his breast, from which he takes a dervish's cap, putting it on his head. Next to this what does he do? He gallops up to the bugler, and tells him to sound the 'kus-rah' ('retreat;' this in military Turkish signifies defeat). The brave boy refused, and said, 'Pasha, we are not defeated; and I will not sound as you order.' Then he cleaves the brave boy's head with his scimitar, and smites others who would not turn. Now when our enemies see these things come to pass they gain heart, return, and attack us again. We become disorganized—why not? We fly back to the outworks and huts we had left, close to the cemetery. But we did not let the traitorous pasha escape. We circle round his horse and compel him to retire with us; much does he struggle, beg, and protest; he had endeavoured to escape; but escape for him was not. We brought him back bound hand and foot."

"Now all these things," continued my informant, "and how the traitorous pasha had been the cause of our disgrace, Gordon Pasha had spied from the top of his house. He was much grieved; and when the wicked pashas, who were both guilty, were brought bound, as I said, hand and foot before him, he spake never a word except 'Away with them!' He was reading Holy Writ at the time.

They were tried by court-martial, and sentenced to death. Seven days afterwards they were executed in the inner yard, near the large square of the prison. They were hewn in pieces by a halberd. I saw the execution, so it is of no use your saying, 'They were shot.' I tell you, according to Turkish military law, a military traitor is always sentenced to be cut to pieces. The two were bound up against the wall by chains and rings. Two soldiers armed with sharp hatchets approached them from out of the sides of a square we had formed. The prisoners' crime was read aloud, and their sentence. A hundred soldiers were present, some senior officers, but not Gordon Pasha. The senior bey cried out, 'Executioners, perform sentence on the traitors!' Immediately these advanced close, and lopped off first their arms above the elbows, then the legs above the knees; then cut their bodies in twain; then decapitated them. They died not till they were cut asunder; then their heads fell on their breasts, and they expired with a hideous yell. Surely their fate was deserved. I cannot say whether Gordon Pasha knew of this manner of execution. I tell you this is the Turkish mode of punishing military traitors, and it is a just punishment."

The conclusion of this narrative was somewhat startling, and assuredly Gordon would never have consented to such an execution On the 19th of March he telegraphed to Sir E. Baring that the two pashas were placed in chains and would be tried on the following day. There was no doubt that they had been guilty of a long course of the most atrocious treachery, and Gordon took the blame to himself for trusting them. Many things came up in evidence. Gordon had ordered the houses on the north side of the city to be loopholed, and had sent crowbars for the work. The crowbars were found buried on the south side of the river. Said Pasha had asked for a steamer with which to bring back his family. He was absent two days, and then said his family was in Khartûm, whereas it transpired that he had only brought back one slave. Gordon feared that these men had not only organized the rising of the tribes investing Khartûm, but had actually dictated their movements and the cutting of the telegraph.

It will be noted that in the present portion of the narrative, namely, the story of Khartûm, many quotations have been made from General Gordon's telegrams and despatches. This has been considered desirable, as the whole of the circumstances were subject of heated controversy at the time, and even now opinions are greatly divided as to the course pursued by the government, the relative attitude of Gordon and those with whom he was corresponding by repeated messages, and the strangely diverse and even apparently contradictory conclusions which resulted from the rapidly-changing aspects of affairs.

With regard to this serious and important incident of the treachery of the two pashas, it is very desirable that we should mark Gordon's own account of the affair. Regarded in connection with his unchanged desire that Zebehr Pasha should be sent to Khartûm his communication was very remarkable, if not strangely significant. After referring to the matters of the crowbars, the steamers, and the grave suspicions that these men had incited and directed the rebellion of the neighbouring tribes, Gordon says:—"I wonder that they never killed me, for I was often quite alone with them on the side of the river near rebels. After the disaster of the 16th of March I sent for them over to the palace; they looked very hang-dog, but I then never believed in their treachery, and thought that they had only been cowards. I had coffee brought, which they refused, and I afterwards heard that they felt sure I was going to poison them. Their having such a thought implies a guilty conscience. The wonder is why they came back after the defeat. I suppose they thought they had not done enough to profit the rebels. Said Pasha, though related to Zebehr, is his sworn foe, for he robbed Zebehr of a lot of money. He was Zebehr's wakeel when Zebehr went to Cairo in 1876, and he was one of those who swore fidelity to Zebehr at the tree at Shaka. He came over to me in 1877 when Zebehr's son revolted. He was much compromised by a letter he wrote. I arrested him, and brought him here and forgave him, tearing up the letter in his presence. He was suspected of treachery in Hicks's advance, but somehow I felt he owed me so much that I could trust him.

Hassan Pasha is brother to Yussaf Pasha, who with Gessi put down the Bahr Gazelle revolt, and afterwards was killed by the Mahdi near Fashoda. Had it not been for these men's treachery, humanly speaking, we should have succeeded on the 16th, for rebels were retreating when these two men went into a wood and, I suppose, called back the rebels. They purposely left, I think, the stockade incomplete,—would not put down the wire entanglement, &c. I assumed this negligence to be due to incapacity and idleness at the time, but I fear it was due to treachery. They are pashas of my fabrication, and are both black soldiers; and townspeople are fierce against them, and I should only have to let them go into the streets to have them shot, but I have preferred to try them. . . . Considering all things one cannot help being very thankful that through my belief in these men we did not lose Khartûm. I think we are now safe, and that as the Nile rises we shall account for the rebels. Plenty of supplies come into the town from the south from the White Nile."

On the 21st of March Gordon telegraphed, 7 A.M.: "Boat coming up river. Very few rebels in sight, though it is their usual day for fighting. The full range of the mountain-gun with rebels is 2200 yards. Escaped prisoners say rebels number 4000. I scarcely think so much. Lightermen were getting a Krupp 16-pounder on a barge to worry them. Had we only 1000 more men we could drive them back, but I am afraid of risking anything more for moment. I am glad to say 140 black soldiers, who were cut off when cutting wood by rapid advance of rebels, are still alive and prisoners. The Sheikh-el-Obeid has written to his son a furious letter on the loss in river attack on *Tewfikieh* steamer, telling his son he is not to attack or to fight, but to starve Khartûm out. In this river attack the rebels were driven to the front on three occasions by their chiefs, and their dead were in heaps. They pushed their bodies into the river. Fortunately we have lots of ammunition, for we have Hicks's reserve ammunition. The steamers in the relief of the steamer *Tewfikieh* expended over 15,000 rounds of Remington ammunition. The only gun-shot of rebels which struck *Tewfikieh* steamer was

one which carried away her rudder. Plenty of supplies came in to-day."

On the 22d: "The court-martial found the pashas guilty to-day. They were shot this afternoon. I am well supplied. Thirty-eight camels came in to-day."

The reverse and the loss of arms and ammunition, occasioned by the treachery of the pashas, was of serious significance, but it did not affect the townsfolk, who remained staunch to Gordon, including those whom he had armed. One man came forward and offered to lend him a thousand guineas without interest, a very welcome aid, for the treasury was nearly exhausted,—another armed and paid 200 blacks for the service of the governor-general. Meantime camels were coming in with provisions, though it was said that the rebels were badly off for food at Halfiyeh, and that some of them were deserting; while the vast number of rebel peasantry who were under arms for so long a time, and who had consequently left their crops under the burning sun without irrigation, were likely to suffer dreadfully in the future. Gordon declared still that the many were forced into rebellion for fear of the few, and owing to the inability of the armed force at Khartûm to protect them. He offered a reward for the capture of the Sheikh-el-Obeid, and seized all the private horses of the town as a precautionary measure, for the tribes on the White Nile were wavering.

On the 22d of March, almost immediately after the conviction of the treacherous pashas, there arrived at Khartûm two emissaries from the Mahdi bringing an answer to Gordon's letter. It was evident that if the Mahdi had at first appeared to be pleased with the appointment and the present sent him by Gordon, he had altered his opinion, and was now so assured of his own position that he could announce his intention of coming to take Khartûm. The friendly sheikhs whom Colonel Stewart had met on his journey on the White Nile had said that the Mahdi had sent orders to Faki Ibrahim, who had the command of 4000 men on that river, not to fight or provoke hostilities, and that similar orders had been sent to Sheikh Baseer, who was in arms on the Blue Nile, forbidding him to attack Sennâr or to advance on Khartûm,

and it was reported that a reign of terror existed at ...eid, w... the false prophet was in fear both of the townsp... and tribesmen; but little dependence could be placed u... rep... this kind, and it soon became evident that the M... i was ... biding his time before sending his swarms of Arabs to take b... Berber and Khartûm. The letter which Gordon h... sent to Mahdi, with the present of a belt, turban, and robes, was transl... as follows:—

"I salute you. Let us have the road open between us. ... up your prisoners. I make you sultan of West Darfûr. I ... half the taxes of the Soudan. I allow the slave-trade to be c... on. Why should you fight? If you wish to fight, I am r... Wait ten months. I will then either declare war against yo... leave the Soudan to you with fixed boundaries."

At all events the answer that came on March 22d ... conciliatory. Gordon himself reporting it said:—"T... m... took my letter to the Mahdi came back to-day. He s... received the letter; he assembled his councillors, and ... the matter for ten days, then wrote an answer ar... He then talked over matter for ten days more, an... te an... letter which he tore up; after another three days he wrote an answer, and sent it by two of his men, who are now waiting outside town. The Mahdi's messengers have come in with the letter, which proposes that I should become Mussulman. He says he looks after the European prisoners; he asserts his claim to be Mahdi, so he is not likely to stop short at Khartûm, but will push his pretensions beyond that. I answered that I had received his letters, styled him Sheikh Mohamed Achmet—thus cancelling his sultanship—and said there was an end of negotiations. Mahdi sent me a dervish's dress, which I sent back. He returned the dress I sent him. The demeanour of Mahdi's emissaries was exceedingly cheeky. When they pertinaciously kept putting the bundle containing the dervish's dress before me I did not know what it contained, and getting cross I threw it across the room; it was only after they left that my clerk, who gave it back to them, told me it was a filthy patched dervish's coat. They refused to

disarm as they entered my presence, and kept their hands upon their swords. I could not help thinking that certainly no Mussulman would have let them go again, and so, at any rate, my being Christian was relied on by them for safety."

It was to be war, and the situation was becoming still more perilous. The treacherous pashas, who were executed on the evening of the same day that the messengers of the Mahdi were sent back, had stolen the two months' pay given for the troops on account of the six months' arrears. They had taken out with them seventy rounds of cannon ammunition instead of the usual eight rounds, in order that the rebels might lay hold of it, and the house of Hassan was stored with rifles and ammunition. "We are daily expecting British troops," telegraphed the *Times* correspondent. "We cannot bring ourselves to believe that we are to be abandoned by the government. Our existence depends on England." Gordon was not going to give up without struggling to the last, however. There was little or no hope of his getting the people out of Khartûm now, and he would not think of escaping and leaving them to do as they best could. The telegram ended by saying that he was then mounting a Krupp gun on an iron lighter so that he might be able to reach the rebel camp on the river. The steamers were actively going hither and thither on both rivers attacking the rebels, who, it was said, intended to sink barges to bar the passage, and to stretch twisted lengths of telegraph wires across the stream. The latter they afterwards accomplished, but the force of the water swept away the obstructions.

By the end of March Gordon knew that the government had emphatically and at considerable length recapitulated the reasons which led them to refuse their consent to the appointment of Zebehr Pasha. He had no certain ground to go upon, and it began to seem to him that if he must be left entirely to his own devices and without aid he should be permitted to act on his own responsibility. He did not neglect to defend the city and the people, to whom he regarded himself as being pledged in return for their having kept faith with him. He and they must stand

or fall together. He would not be guilty of what he considered would be a base act of desertion. He had always been opposed to the notion of getting out of the country without providing for its regular government after his departure. Evacuation was one thing, "*ratting out*" was another. Still less would he consent to seek his own safety by deserting those who had shown their confidence in him. If fighting were to be necessary he had not begun it, but he would prepare to fight to the last ditch and the last biscuit, while nothing else was possible but a dishonourable capitulation.

Gordon was now left to his own resources. If he still fancied that the route from Suakim to Berber would be opened, or that a force either of Turkish, of Anglo-Indian, or of British troops would be sent to his aid at Wady Halfa, at Berber, or at Khartûm, he must have hoped against hope; for the government here was "going to sea" like a floating hencoop, as he remarked afterwards in an entry in his journal; and if the opposition had succeeded in ousting that government and had come into power it is exceedingly doubtful whether they would not have gone to sea also, for they knew no more than anybody else did of the real position of affairs in the remote wastes of the Soudan, and there would still have been the bugbear of an alternative policy and the divided "public voice" to keep them in a condition of suspended animation. Gordon, as was usual with him, regarded the situation as eventually ordered by Providence, and therefore for the best so long as he did all he knew in the performance of what he believed to be his duty. That duty now was to endeavour to hold Khartûm and to fight back the rebels. The Mahdi had had his answer, and would soon endeavour to invest the city more closely. When the Egyptians and townspeople would be put to death or be made prisoners, and the Europeans compelled under penalties to profess Islam, Gordon was not the man to be detained shuffling about the streets disguised as a dervish, nor were he and his companion likely to deny their faith. They were not likely even to be made prisoners; and Gordon afterwards declared that he never would be taken alive.

There was plenty to be done. Gordon's first care was to see how long the provisions would last, and he thought that he could stand a five months' siege. Next he had to provide for the pay of the soldiers and others, and for this he established a paper-currency, represented by a bank-note in Arabic signed and sealed by himself. It was known that these notes would be honoured, and there were arrears of pay due to those soldiers who had not deserted and who would remain faithful. Messengers were sent out in every direction to offer freedom to all slaves who would abandon their masters and go into Khartûm; but not many availed themselves of the offer, for the condition of the country outside gave them opportunities for gaining their freedom without entering a city to defend which they would be called upon to fight. Daily rations were given to the poor in Khartûm, and all the machinery of government went on with regularity; the social life was not devoid of comfort, nor even of cheerfulness, in spite of the climate and impending danger, and the excitement of preparing, not only for defence, but for attack. These preparations were carefully ordered by Gordon himself, and were ingenious and effectual. They enabled him to hold the vast horde of the followers of the Mahdi at bay for months, and to inflict repeated defeats upon them, which kept them in perpetual uncertainty and prevented them from gaining any decided advantage against the handful of the defenders of the city.

The ammunition was removed to the mission station on the river that it might be safe in case of an attack on the fortifications by artillery. Round the walls were three lines of land-torpedoes or percussion mines, which proved to be an effectual barrier, especially as these defences were supplemented by iron "crow's-feet," *chevaux-de-frise*, broken glass, and those wire entanglements of which we have already heard.

The Nile was rising, too, a very important event for the commander who had to trust chiefly to his armed boats for offensive operations against the enemy on the river banks and beyond them. It required almost sleepless vigilance to meet the difficulties that menaced him, but he was equal to the occasion.

The barge with the Krupp gun was taken up the Blue Nile by steamer within a week of the defection of the treacherous pa and the rebels on the bank awoke to the fact that they we being shelled beyond endurance, forty of them being killed. Ne day there was a mutiny among the rascally Bashi-Bazouks Khartûm, and 250 of them had to be disarmed; but the assa on the enemy outside went on: sorties were made by which t were driven back with great loss, and their horses were captu As the Nile rose the naval attacks became more frequent and rapid. The steamers were armoured with bullet-proof plates of soft wood and iron. The barges were cased in the same and were converted into monitors by the construction on ea a castle twenty feet high, from which a double line of fire manded the Nile banks. At night, however, the rebels sw back, and mostly kept up a constant fire against the pal daylight warned them to retreat from the dreaded steamers. palace walls were all dinted and pitted with balls and bulle more than once the enemy attempted an assault, only to be m torpedoes, which scared them back from the city walls w siderable loss. So passed the months of March and April, d which time, telegrams reached the government, and Sir E. Baring was able to report on the state of affairs; but then came news of the fall of Berber. Hussein Khalifa had bravely and loyally held his own as long as possible. He and the merchants and principal people of the town had repeatedly sent to Cairo imploring aid, and saying that the enemy was closing round Berber and Shendy in numbers too great to be much longer repulsed; but no aid was forthcoming, and at length Hussein, having received an intimation that he must do the best for his own safety, retreated north, and Khartûm from that time was for a period completely isolated. Messages could not be certain of reaching the beleaguered city, nor could any definite intelligence be regularly transmitted. The messengers could not enter Khartûm: and now that Berber and the telegraphic station were in the hands of the rebels there were no means of certain communication, even though large sums of money were offered to messengers, who, in disguise, attempted to

escape the intercepting tribes who were drawing more and more closely round the capital.

Before the close of regular communications, however, some remarkable messages had passed; though the confusion and misapprehension were even then increased by the interception of messages on the state of affairs at the telegraph office at Berber, where the clerks were participating in the general panic, and were anxious to escape and go to Korosko and thence to Cairo.

A telegram, dated April 8th, from Gordon to Sir E. Baring, said: "The man who brought letters from Berber states Zebehr is at Korosko; if so, you did not tell me this important fact. Scarcely a day passes without our inflicting losses on rebels, which losses are quite unnecessary if we are to succumb. . . . I have telegraphed to Baker to make an appeal to British and American millionaires to give me £300,000 to engage 3000 Turkish troops from sultan, and send them here. This would settle the Soudan and Mahdi for ever; for my part, I think you would agree with me.

I do not see the fun of being caught here, to walk about the streets for years as a dervish, with sandalled feet; not that (D.V.) I will ever be taken alive. It would be the climax of meanness, after I had borrowed money from the people here, had called on them to sell their grain at a low price, &c., to go and abandon them without using every effort to relieve them, whether those efforts are diplomatically correct or not; and I feel sure, whatever you may feel diplomatically, I have your support—and that of every man professing himself a gentleman—in private."

Sir E. Baring had sent several telegrams to Gordon after the 10th of March, but only one short one appeared to have reached him. This, however, did not alter the fact that no aid was to be given to the beleaguered garrison, and Gordon had realized this with patience and determination, but with smouldering anger. He *had* telegraphed to Sir Samuel Baker as was reported, and that he should have done so showed that he was like a caged bird, not beating against the bars, but seeking in every direction for the means of liberation. But it must be liberation with an effectual defence of those who were under his charge.

The following telegrams will tell their own story; but we must bear in mind that he had been (erroneously) told that Zebehr was, or had been, at Korosko.

On April 16th he telegraphed to Sir E. Baring:—

"As far as I can understand, the situation is this: you state your intention of not sending any relief up here or to Berber, and you refuse me Zebehr. I consider myself free to act according to circumstances. I shall hold on here as long as I can, and if I can suppress the rebellion I shall do so. If I cannot, I shall retire to the Equator, and leave you indelible disgrace of abandoning the garrisons of Sennâr, Kassala, Berber, and Dongola, with the certainty that you will eventually be forced to smash up the Mahdi under great difficulties if you would retain peace in Egypt."

With this telegram two others were sent from Lieutenant-colonel Stewart and Mr. Power. The former said:—

"General Gordon has acquainted me with your intention of not relieving Khartûm, and proposes I should go to Berber and trust to success of your negotiations for opening road from Suakim to Berber. General Gordon has given you his decision as to what he himself intends doing; and weighing all circumstances, and doubting the success of your opening the road to Berber unless by advancing troops, I am inclined to think my retreat will be perhaps safer by the Equator. I shall, therefore, follow the fortunes of General Gordon."

That from Mr. Power said:—

"General Gordon, in view of the present critical situation here, has made the following intimation to me:—

'As soon as it is possible I propose you should go to Berber. If you do not so elect, then justify me to British minister.'

General Gordon, of course, does not like responsibility of taking English consul to Equator, but at present I do not see how it is possible for any but an Arab to get to Berber. I would elect to take the less risky route, and go *viâ* Equator. We are quite blocked on the north, east, and west."

Well might Sir E. Baring report that General Gordon thought he was going to be abandoned, and was very indignant. He was

considering what it would now be possible to do, before it was too late, to provide for the safety of those under his charge, and to get out of the trap in which he had been left—"caught in Khartûm."

On the following day, April 17th, a remarkable telegram reached the foreign office from Sir E. Baring. Gordon had given practical effect to his declaration that he should now consider he was free to do the best he could failing all hope of help from the government. Sir E. Baring sent to Earl Granville saying:—

"Zebehr has received a telegram from Gordon appointing him sub-Governor-general of the Soudan, and directing him to proceed to Berber. He will be watched, and his departure will be prevented."

Sir E. Baring inclosed to Earl Granville a copy of Gordon's telegram to Zebehr Pasha, and added: "Precautions have been taken to watch Zebehr and prevent his escape." This was the message from Gordon to Zebehr, dated April 16th:—

"We have appointed your excellency sub-Governor-general of the Soudan. Please note this. On your arrival at Berber inform me, and do what you can to get peace, and I will see if it be possible to send two steamers on your arrival; and we shall send them, and your excellency will arrange everything for your arrival at Khartûm by the two steamers above mentioned; and the two other steamers, which are at Berber, your excellency must arm them with iron against the bullets of soldiers; and your excellency must bring the needful ——, and take all necessary precautions against danger on the road."

What could Zebehr have done even if he had felt inclined to join Gordon? He was virtually a prisoner under surveillance. What he *said* in reply by telegram on the following day was:—

"We have been ennobled by the receipt of your excellency's telegram appointing us Deputy-Governor-general of the Soudan.

We inform your excellency that we are extremely grateful and obliged for the kind notice of your excellency towards us in every way, and I regret very much to have to tell your excellency with the greatest regret that affairs as at present do not permit of my

passing through now,[1] and I pray God to perpetuate your he
and success."

Copy of this was forwarded to the foreign office in Soud
on the 20th Sir E. Baring said:—

"Zebehr has telegraphed to General Gordon that he canno
to Khartûm. I am told that he would be willing to go if gov
ment made good his previous losses, which he fixes at a very
figure. I have not seen him myself."

Communications were stopped soon after this, and th
a period of nearly five months during which the fate of
and of Gordon, Stewart, and Power were the subject of
and often contradictory rumours, and the cause of no little a
to those who admired the heroism of the man, who, with l
panions and the people who trusted him, was left in the m
a horde of savage foes. These foes, like wolves, were kept
notwithstanding their endeavours to break through the
of the town, where the garrison and the population, dimi
frequent losses in killed and wounded and by sickness, a
ened with approaching famine, yet held their own a
bravely on.

It is impossible to follow the authentic details of this narrative as discovered in telegrams, correspondence, official documents, and the reports of eye-witnesses, without a constant feeling of disappointment if not of indignation, not because of the policy adopted by the government, but because of the repeated contradictions, difficulties, and fatal errors, caused by their adhesion on one hand to a scheme which was contradicted on the other. Only ignorance of the actual state of affairs, ignorance of the inevitable consequences of the rebellion, and the absolute necessity for rapid decision, and for the almost irresponsible authority of any person empowered to take measures for checking the advance of the Mahdi, or for protecting the garrisons and the European and Egyptian population, can account for the placid officialism which insisted on the subjection of Gordon to specific orders and then,

[1] The Blue Book interpretation of the phrase, "affairs as at present do not permit of my passing through now" is, "*i.e.* that the route is impracticable;" but there seems to be a little ambiguity here.

instead of rapidly using efforts to open up the way of escape, persistently shut him up in Khartûm, and left Berber, Shendy, and Kassala hopelessly beleaguered, to be finally (as far as Berber and Shendy were concerned) overwhelmed by the savage hordes who slaughtered numbers of the inhabitants and closed the way of escape for those who had been waiting for a British, Indian, Turkish, or Anglo-Egyptian force to clear the route from Suakim, or to advance by the Nile from Assouan and Wady Halfa.

Gordon himself had doubtless been greatly mistaken; but having consented to be parties to his expedition (the initial error), the mistake of the British government was to have so long refused their aid to carry out the evacuation of the provinces to which he had been sent, and to leave him to continue what became a protracted struggle against fatal odds. To have taken active proceedings at first would have been less opposed to their professedly hard-and-fast policy, than the extensive but abortive expedition which they afterwards caused to be organized when the Mahdi's savage followers swarmed around the destitute city, and deferred their murderous work only till they were sure of the approach of the British forces which had threaded the river and spanned the desert at a cost of life and money that made the original profession of non-intervention only a grim and bitter jest.

To go back for a few weeks in our narrative—on the 12th of February, 1884, Gordon had telegraphed, announcing that he had formed a committee of defence with Hassan Kalifa Pasha, who accepted his assumption of supreme power in the Soudan; and he then said, that he hoped to conciliate the whole province of Berber under his presidency, that the question of getting out the garrison and families was so interlaced with the preservation of well-to-do people of the country as to be for the time inseparable, and any precipitate action separating these interests would throw all well-disposed people into the ranks of the enemy and would fail in its effects. Therefore he trusted that patience would be shown, and that there would be no anxiety about the issue. This request for patience, however, was soon changed by the necessities

of the case into an urgent demand for prompt and effectual aid. The government had been so very willing to exercise patience that it was not to be startled, especially as Gordon had also said, "As to sending forces to Suakim to assist withdrawal, I would care more for rumour of such intervention than for forces. What would have greatest effect would be rumour of English intervention."

The time had come when the swift operation of the forces at Suakim to open the road to Berber was, perhaps, the one act necessary for early success, but the effort was never made, and there was scarcely a rumour of it either. When the people of Berber were at the last gasp, having held out in the hopes of some aid, nothing was done. Step by step the want of knowledge, the want of any sort of appreciation of the actual position of the man to whose commission they had been parties, and of the peril of the people to rescue whom they had sent him, prevented the accomplishment of anything that might have been done if the ministry had been able to realize the situation. One after another opportunities were allowed to pass, appeals were unheard, entreaties were stifled with official formulas, till the world saw the strange spectacle of a British army gathering on the Nile, and crossing the desert to achieve acts of gallantry which made the world ring, but yet accomplishing only a splendid failure; the place which they had gone to deliver lay half in ruins in the hands of a multitude of barbarous fanatics, the followers of an impostor; the people whom they had gone to protect, massacred in the streets or taken into slavery; the hero himself slain, the manner of his death uncertain, the story of his mortal ending and of that of the men who remained faithful to him a mere hearsay, vague and contradictory.

On the 1st of May Earl Granville telegraphed a despatch to Mr. Egerton, who had at that time taken the place of our representative at Cairo, calling his attention to a previous message sent on the 23d of April, instructing him to send several messengers to Gordon through Dongola as well as Berber, or in such other way as might be deemed most prompt and certain. The message to be sent was that Gordon "should keep her majesty's

government informed, to the best of his ability, not only as to the immediate danger to which Khartûm may be exposed, but also as to any prospective danger which may arise later; that in order to be prepared to meet such danger, he should advise us as to the force that would be necessary, under the circumstances, to secure his safe removal, giving his views as to its amount and composition, and as to the route by which it should approach Khartûm, and the time at which the operation should take place. General Gordon should, at the same time, understand that her majesty's government do not propose to supply him with a Turkish or other force for the purpose of undertaking military expeditions against the Mahdi, such expeditions being beyond the scope of the commission which he holds, and at variance with the pacific policy which was the purpose of his mission to the Soudan. If, with the knowledge of this fact, General Gordon decides on remaining at Khartûm, he should state the cause of his decision, and the intention with which he so continues." The telegram went on to say:—

"Her majesty's government fully acknowledge their debt of gratitude to General Gordon for the heroic courage with which he has proceeded upon a mission which presented difficulties insurmountable by ordinary means, together with the possibility of serious danger. They recognize the benefits which have resulted from it, the confidence which, at all events for a time, he restored in Khartûm, the despatch of the women and children in safety from that place, and his success, perhaps, in arresting any military movements upon Egypt, certainly in dispelling the alarms connected with the expectation of such an event." The message continued:—

"On the 4th March a telegram was received from Sir E. Baring stating that General Gordon and Colonel Stewart advised the despatch of a small force of British or Indian cavalry to Berber, as soon as the road was opened between that place and Suakim, but Sir E. Baring himself did not agree in this proposal. It appeared that the object of the expedition was to overawe the tribes between Berber and Khartûm, and reassure the population

of the towns. The military information in the possession of her majesty's government showed that it was unsafe to send a body of cavalry from Suakim, and impossible to send a large for They could not, therefore, authorize the advance of any tro in the direction of Berber until they were informed of the conditions on which it was to be made, and were satisfied that expedition was necessary for General Gordon's safety, and w be confined to that purpose. This decision was reconsider the request of Sir E. Baring, on learning that General was still expecting the arrival of troops at Berber, but regard to the danger of the climate and the extraordinary risk, her majesty's government did not feel justified in alteri

"General Gordon has recently suggested the employme Turkish troops lent by the sultan, variously estimating the required at from 2000 to 4000 men.

"The employment of Turkish troops in the Soudan wo contrary to the views advocated by him on former occa I need not remind you that in his proclamations issued at and Khartûm, of which copies were inclosed in Sir E. B despatch of the 17th March, he declared that he had averte despatch of troops by the sultan, and had come in person prevent further bloodshed.

"Moreover, such a course would involve a reversal of the original policy of her majesty's government, which was to detach the Soudan from Egypt, and restore to its inhabitants their former independence.

"The request is not founded on any necessities of defence in Khartûm, as according to Sir E. Baring's telegrams of the 9th April, General Gordon considered himself safe for a certain time; the town was provisioned for some months, and the market was well supplied. It is clear from his messages to Sir E. Baring and also to Sir S. Baker, reported in the telegrams of the 18th and 19th ultimo from Sir E. Baring, that his object in asking for these troops is to effect the withdrawal of the Soudan garrisons by military expeditions, and to bring about the collapse of the Mahdi.

"Her majesty's government, while labouring under the dis-

advantage of insufficient information, have taken General Gordon's operations in the vicinity of Khartûm to be required for the defence of the place, and they can well understand that such action may be necessary even for defensive purposes.

"But with respect to his request for Turkish troops with a view to offensive operations, General Gordon cannot too clearly understand that these operations cannot receive the sanction of her majesty's government, and that they are beyond the scope of his mission."

This, then, was the attitude of the government, "labouring under the disadvantage of insufficient information." It had become evident that they contemplated the probable necessity of having to send some kind of aid, and were waiting for further intelligence.

On the 10th of May the messengers who had been sent in succession to Gordon by the governor of Dongola returned. They reported the investment of Khartûm; the attacks made upon the rebels by the steamers on the White Nile; that the rebels had constructed wooden shelters to protect themselves from the projectiles fired from the boats; and that when the government forces pursued them into these shelters they fled into the country beyond gunshot. This state of things made it impossible to get into Khartûm, though each copy of the message had been given to a special messenger with orders to do everything in his power to get into Khartûm and bring back an answer.

On the 17th of May the government sent instructions that their previous message should be repeated to General Gordon, with the addition that:—"as the original plan for the evacuation of the Soudan had been dropped, and as aggressive operations could not be undertaken with the countenance of her majesty's government, he was enjoined to consider and either to report upon, or, if feasible, to adopt, at the first proper moment, measures for his own removal and for that of the Egyptians at Khartûm who had suffered for him or who had served him faithfully, including their wives and children, by whatever route he may consider best, having especial regard to his own safety and that of the other British subjects."

For this purpose he was authorized to make free use of money rewards or promises at his discretion. For example, he was at liberty to assign to Egyptian soldiers at Khartûm sums for themselves and for persons brought with them per head, contingent on their safe arrival at Korosko, or whatever point he might consider a place of safety; or he might employ and pay the tribes in the neighbourhood to escort them. The government presumed that the Soudanese at Khartûm were not in danger. In the event of Gordon having despatched any persons or agents to other points, he was authorized to spend any money required for the purpose of recalling them or securing their safety.

It had already been concluded that no immediate assistance could be sent to Berber. Nubar Pasha thought that the pressing demands of the governor might be answered by sending two of the Egyptian battalions at Assouan, and 500 Ababdies collected for the purpose. The general, however, strongly objected to sending Egyptian troops alone, but thought it possible to send an Anglo-Egyptian force either across the Korosko desert, or if that were impossible because of the necessity for procuring a large number of camels, or in consequence of the difficulty of obtaining water, that they might go by Wady Halfa and Dongola. The least possible time that would be required, supposing they could start at once, would be eight weeks by the desert route, and sixteen weeks by that of Dongola. All that could be immediately done was to give the people at Berber an assurance that English aid would be sent to them as soon as practicable, and to prove that action had been taken by pushing on an Egyptian detachment to Korosko.

Mr. Egerton was of opinion, however, that it would be almost madness to run the risk of sending an English or Egyptian force by either route; and the government replied that they could not sanction an attempt to send English troops at that season, or to send an Egyptian force alone. Hassan Khalifa was therefore to be informed that no immediate assistance could be given him, as an expedition by the river could not arrive at Berber in less than sixteen weeks.

On the 10th of June intelligence was received of the fall of

Berber and the massacre of the garrison; the number of persons killed was stated to be 3500.

Gordon had received the telegram which was repeated on May 5th, but it was the 30th of July before he could send a despatch in reply. He then said that the Nile was high, and he hoped to open the route to Sennâr in a few days. Stewart had been slightly wounded in the arm, but was all right again, and there had been no serious losses.

He emphatically declared that the hostilities which he maintained were far from being sought for; but there was no option, since retreat was impossible unless they abandoned civil employés and their families, which was against the general feeling of the troops. He had no advice to give. If they could open Sennâr and the Blue Nile they would be strong enough to retake Berber, if Dongola still held out. The Mahdi would not send succour there. None of the money that was given to Gordon reached Khartûm. It had been captured at Berber, and he wanted £200,000 sent to Kassala. The expense of the garrisons would have to be met. Khartûm cost £500 a day. If the route got opened to Kassala he would send Stewart there with his journal, if he would consent to go. The whole war, he said, was hateful to him, and if there had been any possible way of avoiding the wretched fighting he would have adopted it. The people refused to let him go out on expeditions, owing to the difficulties that would arise in case anything happened. If he could have made any one chief at Khartûm he would have done it, but it was impossible, "for all the good men were killed with Hicks."

It should be borne in mind that at the period when the difficulties of communication with Gordon commenced, Major-general Graham had only just completed his successful repulse of Osman Digma's horde of rebels at El-Teb, and was about moving against them at Tamanieb. The government were so far consistent to their non-intervention policy, that on learning of this intention to advance against the position of the rebels, they telegraphed to Sir E. Baring, saying that they were averse to further military operations being undertaken, unless General

Graham considered that the security of the Berber road would be thereby ensured.

There seemed to be no accurate information, nor could communications be made in time to keep Gordon at Khartûm, Graham at Suakim, and Baring at Cairo *en rapport*. On the 22d of March (1884) General Graham telegraphed to Lord Hartington, that thirty-five pilgrims from Central Africa, who had been already two years on their journey, arrived at Suakim *via* Berber, which place they had left fourteen days before, when the road between Berber and Khartûm was quiet and people were gathering in their harvests. They had not been molested on the road to Suakim, where they saw camels and sheep, and only a few unarmed men. Graham added that caravans with merchandise had not yet attempted to travel that road, and that on that day a cavalry reconnaissance would be made fourteen miles further, on the Suakim-Berber route.

Two days afterwards (March 24) Sir E. Baring had received a telegram from Mr. Cuzzi at Berber, saying that both banks of the Nile were in the hands of the rebels, and that no boats were coming down the river, so that it had been necessary to forward the letters and telegrams to General Gordon by land, some having been sent the day before, concealed in the dress of Arabs, who would attempt to reach Khartûm by a circuitous route. On the 24th Sir E. Baring had not heard from Gordon, and telegraphed to Earl Granville:—"It appears to me that under the present circumstances he will not be able to carry out your lordship's instructions, although those instructions involve the abandonment of the Sennâr garrison on the Blue Nile, and the garrisons of Bahr-Gazelle and Gondokoro on the White Nile.

The question now is how to get General Gordon and Colonel Stewart away from Khartûm. In considering this question it should be remembered that they will not willingly come back without bringing with them the garrison of Khartûm and the government officials."

Communication between Khartûm and Berber had then been interrupted.

We have already seen what was Gordon's position at that time and afterwards. A native witness who was there, afterwards said:—"Soldiers lined the trenches all day and night. There were four guns there, two pointing towards Bahr-Abead, one facing from the iron gate near the cemetery, one facing the village of Burdi. Of the crowds of blacks you speak of living in the poor quarters of Khartûm, Gordon made soldiers. All men were compelled to carry arms; regular soldiers got rations of dhoora, the others got government biscuit. We were always expecting, from dawn to sunset, from sunset to dawn, the arrival of the English. Whenever we heard news of them our hearts rejoiced. The Arabs have a fear of the English, dating back from the time of Arabi's defeat. They believe they carry with them a piece of wood which they can extend to any height, that up this they climb, and spy their enemies at any distance. All were at first loyal in Khartûm, except a few of the head men—such as the chief baker and butcher; but Gordon, who well knew these men to be traitors, said, 'Suffer them to remain on at their work; we will show them what justice is when the English come.' As time wore on and provisions were become short by reason of the strictness of the siege—for the Arabs were closing around—Gordon sent away all the old men and women who were unable to work out of Khartûm; they were afraid to go at first, but Gordon gave them an introduction to Mahomet Achmet, writing as follows:—'Be kind to these, treat them well, I charge you. Behold, I have kept and fed all these for four months; try how you will like doing so for one month.' Mahomet Achmet accepted them, and they are with him to this day.

"As it was at the time of the Tou el Kebeah (great flood); as it will be at El Achrah (last day); as it has often been when in cities of the earth enemies have been knocking at the gate without, they bought and sold; they married and were given in marriage. The festivities and feastings took place nightly. The Soudanese are a light-hearted people even when a cloud hangs over them. You would have thought nothing was going amiss. It is true they believed the English were coming."

Gordon, waiting for the despatches which did ich had received no news from Sir E. Baring or Nubar the 30th of March and the 30th of July when he "The troops and people are full of heart; I canno for all the Europeans. The Arabs are in poor h say that about 2000 determined men alone keep th I expect it will end in a terrible famine throughout yesterday stated the *Queen of England* had arrive t Perhaps it is a steamer. The only reinforcements th received since the 27th of November, [illegible] date defeat was known at Cairo, is seven persons, inclu m we have sent down over 600 soldiers and 2000 people here and Arabs laugh over it. I shall not leave till I can put some one in. If the Europeans like to Equator, I will give them steamers, but I will not leave people after all they have gone through.

As for routes, I have told you that the one from ' along right bank of Nile to Berber is the best, and, had no fallen, would have been a picnic. The other route is fro to Kassala, and to Abu Haraz, on Blue Nile, which would up to Kassala, but I fear it is too late. We must fight it out with our own means: if blessed by God we shall succeed; if not, His will, so be it. The main thing is to send money to Kassala. Where is Wood? Kind regards to him and Generals Stephenson and Graham. Why write in cipher? It is useless, for Arabs have no interpreter.

Seyd Mahomet Osman, of Kassala, ought to be the route for your despatches, and you ought to give him a present of £500, for he saved Kassala. We have made a decoration, with three degrees, silver-gilt, silver, and pewter, with inscription, 'Siege of Khartûm,' with a grenade in centre. School children and women have also received one; consequently I am very popular with the black ladies of Khartûm. We have issued paper notes to amount of £26,000, and borrowed £50,000 from merchants, which you will have to meet. I have sent in addition £8000 paper notes to Sennâr. What Kassala is doing for money I do not know;

of course we only get taxes paid in lead, so you are running up a good bill up here."

On the 31st July he added a postscript which showed that though the despatches had not reached him he had received the telegram sent him with respect to his abandonment of Khartûm: —"You ask me 'state cause and intention in staying at Khartûm, knowing government means to abandon Soudan,' and in answer I say, I stay at Khartûm because Arabs have shut us up, and will not let us out. I also add that even if the road was opened the people would not let me go unless I gave them some government or took them with me, which I could not do. No one would leave more willingly than I would if it was possible.

"We continue, thank God, to drive Arabs back up Blue Nile, and hope to open road to Sennâr in eight days or less, and to recapture small steamer lost by Saleh Bey. We then hope to send an expedition to surprise and recapture Berber. It is a *sine quâ non* that you send me Zebehr; otherwise my stay here is indefinite. And you should send £50,000 to Dongola, to be forwarded to Berber if we take it. River begins to fall in, say, four months. Before that time you must either let the sultan take back the Soudan, or send Zebehr with a subsidy yearly. *D.V.* we will send down to Berber, to take it, the Egyptian troops here, so that they will be on their way home; and I shall send Stewart. We hope (*D.V.*) to recapture the two steamers which were lost at Berber on its fall.

The equator and Bahr-Gazelle provinces can be (*D.V.*) relieved later on, and their troops brought here. As to Darfûr, it must be afterwards thought of, for we do not know if it still holds out. As for Kordofan, I hope and believe the Mahdi has his hands full. I would vacate Sennâr if it was possible, but I do not think it is, and also the moral effect of its evacuation would be fatal to our future success, while we have not food to feed the refugee people who would come here. You will see if we open road to Sennâr from here, we cut the Arab movement in two by Blue Nile. I repeat I have no wish to retain this country. My sole desire is to restore the prestige of the government in

order to get out garrisons, and to put some ephemeral government into position, in order to get away."

At the end of July Gordon had lost 700 men, but he had driven the rebels out of Buri, had captured quantities of rifles and ammunition, and had cleared the Arabs out of thirteen zeribas which they had constructed on the river banks.

On the 24th of August, in letters which he sent to the officer commanding the royal naval force at Massowah, he said: "We have had a series of petty fights with Arabs from the 12th of March to the 30th July, when we were able, thank God, to drive them back and open the road to Sennâr, and we are now relieved from the immediate pressure of Arabs. We are going to attack them to-morrow, and meditate a raid on Berber in order to let pass to Dongola a convoy which accompanies Colonel Stewart and English and French consuls. We shall (*D.V.*) destroy Berber and return to our pirate nest here. . . . We are going to hold out here for ever, and are pretty evenly matched with the Mahdi. He has cavalry and we have steamers. We are very cross with you all, for since the 29th March we have had not one word from outer world. I have paid as much as £140 for a spy, and you gave that poor devil (so he says) 20 dollars to go from Massowah to Khartûm. However, I have given him £20. One of our steamers has 970 bullet marks on her, another 850 ditto. We have provisions for five months, and hope to get in more."

This letter was continued by another on the 26th August wherein he said: "We have (thank God!) succeeded in taking Arab camp and killing Arab commander-in-chief (*R.I.P.*). I do not know our losses yet. This victory clears our vicinity on three parts of circle. . . . There is one bond of union between us and our troops; they know if the town is taken they will be sold as slaves, and we must deny our Lord if we would save our lives. I think we hate the latter more than they hate the former. *D.V.* we will defeat them without any help from outside. Spies from Kordofan report advance of Mahdi with twenty-six guns towards Khartûm. I have always thought this is probable, and that the question will be solved here; but I trust he will not

succeed as we have made the place very strong; if he fails he is done for."

We may now conclude the account furnished by these interrupted messages from Gordon, some of which came to hand. On the 17th September Sir E. Baring sent to Earl Granville a translation of a cipher message received from Gordon on the 23d of August, in which he said:—

"Concerning the Soudan:—

1. English troops must be sent to the Soudan. Zebehr Pasha must also be appointed, with assistant, and with a salary of £8000 per annum.

2. On the arrival of the English troops in the Soudan the Egyptian troops will return to Egypt.

3. If the sultan would send 200,000 (2000) of his troops the Soudan could be handed over to him.

4. If no part of this scheme is carried out, and if the rebels attack the people in the Soudan and kill them, you will be responsible for their lives and all their salaries.

5. The expenses and pay of the soldiers in the Soudan amount to £1500 a day.

6. The troops in Dongola, Khartûm, the Equator, Bahr-el-Gazelle, Kassala, and Sennâr are more than 30,000 in number.

7. You have now become responsible to these troops for the sum of £300,000.

8. I hope shortly to take Berber. I have already sent Stewart Pasha, the English consul, and the French consul, with regular troops and Bashi-Bazouks, for that purpose.

9. I had already written to you that I should send Egyptian troops to take Berber and to occupy it, and that these troops would be under your protection; but, fearing that reinforcements might not be sent, and fearing that you might pay no attention to those that I should send, and naturally fearing that a panic might occur among my troops, I thought it more advisable that, after taking the town, they should remain in it fifteen days and burn it, and then return to Khartûm again. Stewart Pasha will proceed to Dongola. Then I will send to the Equator to withdraw the people

who are there. After that it will be impossible for Mohammed Ahmet to come here, and please God, he will meet his death by the hands of the Soudanese.

If the sultan's troops come, they should come by Dongola and Kassala. You should give them £300,000.

I inform you that Mohammed Ali Pasha is the only person in the Soudan on whom I can rely and who can replace me."

To this Sir E. Baring added that he had repeated the 8th and 9th paragraphs to General Kitchener, who had charge of the Intelligence Department, and used every effort to get messages to and from Khartûm. Sir E. Baring told him to use his utmost endeavours to enter into communication with Gordon and Stewart, and inform them of position and movements of British troops in the Nile Valley, for by that time the English government had been compelled to abandon their avowed determination—rather than abandon Gordon—and already the expedition, which was intended to deliver the generals at Khartûm, but not to fight for the purpose of holding Sennâr and retaking Berber, had begun to move towards the beleaguered city.

The khedive also received from Gordon two telegrams in Arabic. They were undated, and did not reach him till the 18th of September. They had probably been sent much earlier, for the 23d of August was, as we have seen, the date of the latest despatches, and the first entry in Gordon's journals, which were recovered long afterwards, and probably commenced only after communications were almost hopelessly cut off, is dated September 10th. The message to the khedive, who had by extra as well as ordinary firman appointed Gordon as governor of the Soudan, said: "On my arrival at Khartûm I found it impossible to withdraw the soldiers and employés to Egypt on account of the insurrection of the Arabs and the communications being interrupted. Therefore I asked that I might be helped with reinforcements. Hitherto they have not come, and thus occurred the events at Berber. I had already warned Egypt to pay attention to that town. I will consider how it can be recovered from the rebels, or how troops can be stationed there for two months during high Nile. After

which, if troops do not come, no doubt the same will again occur in Berber as before, and the troops will be destroyed. Is it right that I should have been sent to Khartûm with only seven followers after the destruction of Hicks's army, and no attention paid to me till communications were cut? I received a letter fifteen days ago from the governor of Kassala, informing me that his province was in its usual condition, and road open and safe between it and Massowah, and telegraph in working order. If it is still intended to leave the Soudan, how is it that the Kassala province remains?

I hope you will send a telegram showing clearly the present intentions with regard to the Soudan, and let it be in Arabic so that the people of Khartûm may read it. The telegrams which come in English cipher do not state what are these intentions, and only ask us for information and waste time. Thus, through having so often promised the people of Khartûm that assistance would come, we are now as liars in their eyes. If it is the intention to charge me to hold the Soudan with only the Soudani troops which are in it, I will do my best, although without money, but it is impossible to resist with them thousands of the Mahdi's men. It would be the best course to negotiate with the Porte for the despatch of Turkish troops. They should be given £200,000 per annum for expenses. Here I am in Khartûm as a hostage and guardian. I hope as long as I remain here, when Turkish troops come, that the people of the Soudan will be unable to resist them, and will not fire a single shot, and that peace and quietness will return. It is impossible to leave Khartûm without a regular government established by some power. I will look after the troops on the Equator, Bahr-el-Gazelle, and in Darfûr, although it may cost me my life.

Perhaps the British government will be displeased with the advice which I have given. The people of the Soudan are also displeased with me on account of my fighting against them, and on account of their not attaining their object in following the Mahdi.

I shall send Stewart Pasha and Mr. Power, the English consul, with the soldiers, who will proceed to Berber in order to

open communications with Dongola, and in order to carry on the necessary discussions in connection with the Soudan."

This intention of sending Stewart and Power to Berber in order to open communications with Dongola and to carry on the necessary discussions in connection with the Soudan, was confirmed in a message which he sent to Nubar Pasha on the 23d of August, saying that he had appointed the three steamers to inspect the situation of Sennâr and to discover its needs. On their return he intended to detail a military force from Khartûm composed of 2000 men and send it by steamers to Berber to retake it from the hands of the rebels, with provisions for two months only. With that force he proposed to send Stewart and all the consuls. The troops and the camels were to remain at Berber after its recapture, while Stewart went on to Dongola by a small boat, specially appointed for the voyage, that he might hold a parley on the Soudan question. It was believed afterward that Gordon, having determined that he would not desert the people at Khartûm, and knowing that the result was doubtful, took this opportunity of giving the chance of liberty to the companions who would not otherwise have sought their own safety by leaving him. The scheme of retaking Berber was, at all events, not an impossible enterprise; and there was good reason to suppose that the party would reach Dongola, where the mudir was holding out loyally, and on the 23d of July was reported to have defeated 5000 rebels near Debbeh.

Alas! the expedition came to a tragic end. On the 10th of September the detachment marched, and when the position of the rebels had been taken and destroyed the main body returned to Khartûm, while Stewart, Power, and about forty others steamed down the river for Dongola.

It was a disheartening story, of which Major Kitchener sent home the report in the first days of October. It was not till the end of the month that the terrible news was confirmed, but then it was known that the whole party had perished by the hands of the enemy, Stewart and Power having been massacred with the others. By that time—the end of October—Lord Wolseley,

who was then at Wady Halfa, sent two messengers to inquire as to the fate of the party, and learned that the steamer struck on a rock, and that all on board except two natives were killed by order of the treacherous Sheikh Suleiman Wad Gamr, who had come from a small house near the bank and called to Colonel Stewart to land without fear. This sorrowful story belongs, however, to a later page. We must for the moment return to the summer of 1884.

Early in the year—almost at the commencement of the session—Mr. Gladstone, replying to a vote of censure which Sir Stafford Northcote had proposed to be passed upon the government, distinctly refuted the charge of unnecessary delay in the appointment of General Gordon, and showed that Sir Charles Wilson had, months previously, recommended that appointment, but that it could not be made because of the disagreements between Gordon and the Egyptian government. There was no very cordial sentiment between Gordon and the khedive, with whom he had never been on truly confidential terms, and whose service he had quitted with an expression of a feeling not far removed from reproach and disdain. It was not till this difficulty was overcome on both sides that Gordon consented to accept the commission, and then the relations between him and Tewfik and the Egyptian ministry were satisfactory enough. So far from the English ministry having delayed matters, Gordon had no sooner consented to act than his departure for Egypt was reckoned, not by days, but by hours. There had been apparent hesitation in taking further and more effectual steps for the relief of Tokar and Sinkat, and the result had been that we were too late to save either; but this arose from want of the knowledge, which could only be obtained from Gordon himself, who was then on his desert journey and beyond the means of communication. It was feared that the consequence of despatching a British force to relieve these garrisons might have the effect of inciting the tribes around Khartûm to attack that place and to massacre the people there, who were so much more numerous than at the two stations

in the Red Sea territory that it became a serious question whether they ought to be sacrificed or involved in imminent danger by any attempt to relieve the smaller garrisons. Directly Gordon reached a point where telegrams and messages could reach him the doubt was solved, and General Graham's expedition against the followers of Osman Digma was completed and promptly commenced operations.

It must, of course, be remembered that the government had absolutely forsworn any military operations with British troops for the purpose of retaining or regaining the territory of the Soudan, and at any rate the main body of the opposition, and even the Conservative leaders, were not provided with any definite alternative policy. Their words of censure were vague, and their attitude was feeble, timid, and uncertain. All they seemed to desire to do was to drive the Liberal government from power. They could refer with bitter intensity to the sufferings of the garrisons at Tokar and Sinkat, and they could bestow fanciful epithets upon the prime-minister and his colleagues, but they did not venture plainly to proclaim their readiness to take the responsibility for a bold and unmistakable policy of intervention which would have involved the actual establishment of a British protectorate in Egypt. They denounced the government for not doing something which they failed to define, and it was evident that they were unable to grasp the situation for not grappling with which they persistently twitted the ministry.

The second vote of censure was proposed by Sir Michael Hicks Beach on the 12th of May, at a time when intelligence from Gordon had for some time ceased to be received and public excitement ran high, but again the opposition could frame no positive declarations of their own. To condemn the government for not having done what they were not prepared to declare they would have done themselves, was not an effectual mode of representing public opinion; and the Marquis of Hartington, to whom the reply was committed, could hold his own without great difficulty, even though he had against him the independent opinion of men on the Liberal side, Mr. Forster and Sir Wilfrid Lawson.

The terms of the proposed vote of censure were, "That this house regrets to find the course pursued by her majesty's government has not tended to promote the success of General Gordon's mission, and that even such steps as be necessary to secure his personal safety are delayed;" and Sir M. H. Beach reminded the house of the assurance, originally given by the prime-minister, that General Gordon was to have "a free hand" in the Soudan in order to carry out the government programme of "rescue and retire," and he contrasted this promise with the repeated interference of the government with the general's plans. He contended that while they were urging the use of only pacific measures in one part of the Soudan they were pressing forward warlike movements in another, and by these means effectually neutralized Gordon's pacific intentions. When, after General Graham's victories, the government refused to send the desired troops to Berber, they left full discretion to Gordon to remain at Khartûm or to retire by any available route; and this offer was the most disgraceful suggestion ever made by a British government to a British soldier or a Christian gentleman; and he was not surprised at the strong language used by Gordon in his reference to the indelible disgrace which would fall on the British government if the garrisons of Sennâr, Kassala, Berber, and Dongola were left to their fate. The government, he declared, "had not dared to resent this unparalleled language of a subordinate, because the country fully endorsed it."

But the attitude of the opposition was still weak, and while it was easy to denounce the action or the want of action of the government it was by no means easy to proclaim what the Conservative policy would be. In his reply Mr. Gladstone maintained that the suggestion which had been made, involved neither more nor less than the immediate despatch of British troops to Khartûm—without any regard to climate, the supply of water, or the state of the river;—and the suppression of the Mahdi, which meant the reconquest of the Soudan. The government had declined to send troops to Wady Halfa and to Berber, but they had acted on military advice, and bearing in mind not

merely the great military risk but the small mili
which would have resulted. Mr. Gladstone had pre
answer to questions (on the 24th of April), that th
apparently at that time no military or other dange
he admitted that the country felt a profound intere
sense of obligation dependent upon it with regard
General Gordon, and he now (May 13) read the tele
from Gordon, including the one from Dongola, to show
was still no military danger. He, however, admitted to
the obligations of the government to General Gordon, a
ceived that, by the despatch of April 23d, they had entered
a covenant with him that on reasonable proof of danger he w
be assisted. The country would never grudge any reaso
effort for the protection of its agents; but it was the duty
government to consider the treasure, the blood, and the hono
the country, and the circumstances of the time, the season,
climate, and the military difficulties. Conscious of what
obligations were they would continue to use their best endeav
to fulfil them, unmoved by the threats and the captious c
of the opposition.

It was to Lord Hartington, in his reply to succeeding speeches, that a more complete answer to the proposed vote of censure was left, however. He stated that he should make no reference to those expressions contained in the telegrams of General Gordon which had been somewhat eagerly grasped at by the opposition. What they had to look at in these telegrams was the information and the advice contained in them.

"As to the expression of General Gordon's opinion, or the language in which it is couched, I do not think that we ought to trouble ourselves much more about them than if they came from any other sources. It is quite clear to any one who has read the whole series of General Gordon's telegrams that he is a man of extremely impulsive character; that as soon as an idea comes to him he immediately proceeds to telegraph it; and that his frame of mind varied very rapidly from day to day, even from hour to hour. It is also perfectly well known that General Gordon,

Christian hero though he be, has a quick temper as well as other people, and I am not surprised that, with the extremely imperfect knowledge of the views and intention of the government that was in his possession, he expressed his indignation in somewhat strong language. But the fact that General Gordon spoke of indelible disgrace—an expression which has been fastened on by the opposition—has not necessarily the effect of attaching it to us. I say that it would be indelible disgrace if we should neglect any means at the disposal of this country to save General Gordon; but if General Gordon tells us that indelible disgrace attaches to the government with reference to these other garrisons, then I say that I do not admit that General Gordon is, on this point at least, a better authority than anyone else. The government were under no moral obligation to use the war resources of this empire for the relief of those garrisons. General Gordon's mission did not involve the employment of military force, and the fact that he has been despatched to Khartûm, and that he has done, and is doing, all that he considers to be best and most advisable to relieve these garrisons, does not alter the moral obligation that rests upon her majesty's government, and cannot in itself affect the accusation of indelible disgrace.

"It appears to me that the scope and character of General Gordon's mission have been very much lost sight of, and have been misrepresented and exaggerated throughout the whole of this debate. . . . At the time General Gordon was despatched the situation was one of very great difficulty and anxiety, as it is now. The position of the garrisons in the Soudan and of the Egyptian officials there, appeared to be one of the greatest danger, and almost hopeless. They were separated from each other by enormous distances, frequently by immense deserts, and were only united to each other by rivers, the navigation of which was extremely precarious and difficult. They were separated by still further distances from Egypt, the base on which they had relied; and the moral support and influence of the Egyptian government, by means of which alone they had up to that time held their position in the Soudan, had been destroyed. For that condition

of things the government never have admitted or responsibility. It was not her majesty's governmen Egyptian officials or garrisons into that position of did not encourage, but, on the contrary, they dissu expedition of General Hicks which brought abou of the Egyptian authority in the Soudan. In the government, the first condition of the problem b condition openly and frankly avowed to the house, wa troops should not be employed for the purpose of e garrisons and officials from the position in which th owing to no action of the British people or governme mistakes made in former times by their own government. attempt might have failed in its object, and could succeeded through the reconquest of the Soudan and gation of those who had revolted against what was uni acknowledged to be an intolerable and oppressive govern Her majesty's government was not prepared to reconquer country either for the Egyptian government or for this nat neither were they prepared to make sacrifices of English and life for the purpose of re-endowing the Egyptian govern with the provinces of the Soudan. It was, in their opinion, no part of their duty to risk English treasure or life in enabling the Egyptian garrisons to march out with flying colours from their positions in the Soudan. At the same time there existed in this country a very strong and natural desire that some effort should, if possible, be made to mitigate the sufferings of the retreat of those garrisons. One chance of this there appeared to be. There was one man of known ability and energy who had great experience in the government and affairs of the Soudan, who was believed to have acquired great influence in that country, who was universally pointed to by the public opinion of this country, and who appeared himself to be of opinion that it would be possible, by sending himself, without the support of any military force, to accomplish something for the withdrawal of the garrisons. In the conversations which General Gordon had with members of the government, before he undertook his mission, he explained

to some extent the views which he entertained on this point. General Gordon said that in his opinion the danger of massacre of the garrisons was greatly exaggerated, that the power of the Mahdi was greatly exaggerated, and that it was probable that no opposition would be offered to the peaceful withdrawal of the Egyptian officials and such portions of the garrisons as might desire to leave. General Gordon further expressed his opinion that probably the greater number, even of the Egyptian population, would not desire to leave, that the greater number of the troops would probably join the Mahdi or the insurrectionary party, and that the withdrawal of such persons as it might be desirable to withdraw could be effected without any great difficulty or great risk of massacre. At the same time Sir E. Baring had asked, on behalf of the Egyptian government, that a British officer should be sent to superintend the evacuation of Khartûm and the retreat of the other garrisons. It seemed to us at that time that this was a chance which we ought not to throw away, and that we should be wanting in our duty if we refused the offer of General Gordon's services, rejected the demands of Sir E. Baring and the Egyptian government, and allowed lives to be sacrificed through the known incapacity of the principal Egyptian officials of the Soudan. This was the primary object of the mission which General Gordon accepted. It is perfectly true that he thought it might be in his power to do something more—to secure the establishment of a government in the Soudan to replace the Egyptian government. The evacuation, even if it should lead to the establishment in Khartûm and other places of the Mahdi or the heads of the insurrection, was the primary object which General Gordon went out to accomplish, and which he willingly accepted.

I am not going to imitate the conduct pursued by some honourable gentlemen opposite, in condemning without further information, or in casting blame or doubt on General Gordon when his proceedings appeared to be somewhat inconsistent with the objects for which he left this country. We know what was the treatment he received from honourable gentlemen opposite. No sooner was there a whisper of a proclamation which appeared

to countenance some extension of the slave-trade than the most indignant protests were made from the other side of the h and we were asked if we were going to support an envoy proposed to re-establish the slave-trade. No sooner h rumour of General Gordon's application to have Zebehr to him reached this country than similar opposition was m an there were similar notices of resistance. But although none of are entitled to throw any doubt whatever on the measures w General Gordon thought fit to adopt, I am bound to say that t are some portions of his policy which, as at present advise not clear to us; and it is not clear to us that he has not depa in some respects from his original purpose. It is possible t General Gordon overrated at first to some extent the probal as to the success of his mission; he might have over-estimated h own strength in dealing with the objects to be achieved, not me the removal of the garrisons, but the reconstitution of the government of the Soudan, and what he thought a necessary preliminary to the reconstitution of settled government in the Soudan, t crushing of the power of the Mahdi. It may be that he fo that the execution of his original intentions, as I have desc them, was perfectly impossible. But on the evidence before us we have had proof, to some extent, that the situation of the garrisons was not inaccurately estimated by General Gordon."

Lord Hartington went on to say that in the case of Tokar the garrison, though it surrendered, was not massacred, and that it did not appear that that garrison would not have been allowed to depart even without the intervention of a British force. He also came to the conclusion that there had been no massacre at Shendy, and that the emigration of the officials and the army from Berber had been accomplished without loss of life. Up to the time at which he was speaking he contended there was nothing to show that Gordon was wrong in believing that probably there would be no difficulty put in the way by the inhabitants of the country, of the Egyptian garrisons and people leaving the places which they then occupied. Subsequent information contained in later telegrams and despatches showed, as we have seen, either that Gordon's

estimate had been inconclusive, or that the condition of affairs in the Soudan had changed.

Dealing with the first declaration of the proposed resolution, that the course pursued by the government had not tended to support the success of General Gordon's mission, Lord Hartington pointed out that the mover omitted to state whether there was any possible course which, in the opinion of his colleagues, would have been more successful; but the speeches made in support of the motion went a great deal further—so far as to say that the course taken by the government tended not to promote but to defeat the success of General Gordon's mission. In examining these allegations Lord Hartington first referred to the representation that the military operations at Suakim exasperated the Mahdi and his followers. He contended that not only was there no syllable of proof of this having been the case, but that the telegrams were in an entirely opposite direction to such a conclusion, as when, on the 29th of February, Gordon, speaking of a rising of tribes near Kassala, telegraphed, "Hadendowa have raised tribes near Kassala, attacked Kassala, but were repulsed; road still closed. As Baker's defeat has caused this you ought to do something to draw these Hadendowa down to Suakim." On the 3d of March another telegram had said, "I have no doubt that Graham's victory will withdraw the enemy from the vicinity;" and on the 8th, "Kassala will hold out without difficulty after Graham's victory."

The proposal to send Zebehr was a question that did not need to be discussed at length, because it was not seriously maintained by the opposition that he should have been sent. The most that had been said was, that this being refused the government ought to have proposed something else, but after all the experience that had been acquired, the opposition had not suggested what ought to have been done. Mr. Forster, however, had said, "Gordon ought to have been asked to remain in Khartûm himself, and to establish a settled government there and in the Soudan." To this Lord Hartington replied by asking what knowledge his right honourable friend possessed that it was in the power of General Gordon to do so; and what help it was possible, in February and March, to give

to Gordon; what assistance it would have been pos
him in the task of establishing a settled governmer
and in the provinces?

In reference to the contention that after Gra
troops should have been despatched to Suakim to
and occupy Berber, Lord Hartington repeated
said previously, that the sending of troops to Berber had
been suggested by Gordon himself as an isolated ope
except in connection with the proposal which he mad
should be sent out to succeed him. In accordance wi
recommendations of General Gordon, Sir E. Baring, a
military authorities, advantage was taken of the victories g
to push on a reconnaissance in force in the direction of the rc
Berber, and if possible to establish communications with that
and the result was, that although the season had not reached
greatest heat, the troops suffered fearfully, so that on one
march almost half the small force employed had to fall out frc
the effect of the heat. That operation, accompanied as it was
great suffering to the troops, while it was not seriously r
though it found that a certain small force was still collected un
Osman Digma, proved conclusively that any military expedition
on a considerable scale in the direction of Berber was absolutely impossible. It might have been possible at great risk and the certainty of great suffering to send a small force of cavalry; but that force, if sent at all, must have been sent unsupported by artillery or infantry. In the attempt that had been made the most difficult part of the route had not been experienced. The difficulties of the first 150 miles, though they might have been overcome, were immense, but they were as nothing compared with the difficulties of the route over the last 100 miles.

"I remember," said Lord Hartington, "the questions that used to be addressed to me two or three years ago when General Roberts undertook his march from Cabul to Candahar with a considerable and perfectly-equipped force. I then received most urgent expostulations and admonitions from gentlemen opposite as to the inexpediency and recklessness of cutting off such a force

from its base and sending it to march in an enemy's country without provision for perfect communications. I am, therefore, surprised at the extreme facility with which honourable members opposite adopt the proposal that it would have been wise to send a small force of cavalry across 200 miles of desert—100 of which are without water—without any provision for communicating with its base, and with the absolute certainty that whatever might befall it, no reinforcements could reach it for months. And what was the object to be accomplished in return for this extraordinary risk. No one could suppose that a small force of 200 or 300 cavalry would have been sufficient to undertake any considerable operation for the practical assistance of General Gordon. What he relied upon was the moral effect that would be produced by sending any British soldiers at all; and I do not deny that it is possible that if this risk had been run, and if this force had successfully arrived at Berber, a moral effect might have been produced; but that is entirely a matter of supposition, and is utterly incapable of proof."

Lord Hartington was by no means impressed with the probable moral effect of the operation of British soldiers in the Soudan. He thought that it had been over-estimated, and that the experience at Suakim had not been in favour of it, since it did not save the garrison of Tokar, nor prevent the followers of Osman Digma from showing fight in a manner which proved that the fanatic savages were at all events not impressed with fear. He did not think that an expedition should be made to "smash the Mahdi," as General Gordon expressed it; and to form such an expedition for the purpose of giving a satisfactory government to the inhabitants of the Soudan was a task which was beyond the responsibility that the British government ought to undertake. Such an expedition should not be made, even to enable the garrisons of the Soudan to march out with the honours of war. The government ought to be satisfied, as far as it was possible to satisfy themselves, that such an expedition was necessary to secure the safety of General Gordon, and of those for whose safety he had made himself responsible. It was necessary that they should be satisfied

that the original view as to the possibility of evacuation had become impossible of execution. General Gordon would not be called upon by the government to do anything derogatory to his honour or his character. Those who had trusted themselves in his service, those who had fought for him, those who had increased the perils in which they stood before—by having entered his service, he was no doubt responsible for and could not desert; but there was no reason to believe that if escape were possible for him it was not also possible for them. The fact that he had risked his life in a mission of mercy—a pacific mission—did not make him responsible for the performance of impossibilities. It did not make him responsible, or the government more responsible than they were before his mission was undertaken, for the safe withdrawal of the garrisons from the Soudan—garrisons which were not placed there in the service of England, or by the orders of England. There was nothing to show that the danger in which those garrisons had always stood after the victory over General Hicks, had been increased by any orders given by General Gordon or any measures taken by him. For the relief of those garrisons General Gordon was not bound in honour; but he was bound in honour not to desert those who had co-operated with him, and taken service under him. The government were bound to satisfy themselves of the practicability as well as of the necessity for any steps they might decide upon or announce for the rescue or relief of General Gordon; they were bound to satisfy themselves by inquiry, the collection of information, and by consultation with the best authorities, before committing this country to an undertaking which must be difficult, and might be one of enormous difficulty. They must consider the scale of the preparations which would have to be made, the route which it would be possible to take, and the time of year when it would be possible for operations to commence.

The government were thinking, and had long been thinking, what measures they could take for the relief of General Gordon; but it was asked whether this or any other government would be justified in risking the health and safety of an expedition by sending it out before the month of September or October? By

the river route the distance from Cairo to Khartûm was 1600 miles, interrupted by cataracts, and many parts of the river were very little known, and had never been traversed by large bodies of men, or used for the carriage of large quantities of forces. Was an expedition on a large scale in the very height of summer feasible or justifiable? He did not say that measures of the kind indicated were impossible, but he did say they were of such a magnitude that they were not to be attempted, and certainly not to be announced, until their practicability had been clearly demonstrated, and until the measures which it would be necessary to take were clearly foreseen. If such necessity should be proved, and if such practicability should be demonstrated, then he believed that this country would be prepared to grudge no sacrifice to save the life and honour of General Gordon. At the same time it would be prepared, if possible, to give relief to those garrisons for the safety of which, as he had said, the government admitted and accepted no responsibility; but whose sufferings, unmerited, undeserved, and cruel, not by reason of any claims they possessed upon us, in the name of mercy and humanity were fully and completely appreciated.

It may well be understood from these declarations that the government had already determined to organize an expedition for the rescue of Gordon and his companions, and this was actually the case. It was proposed to send out an expeditionary force in the following October, when a journey by the Nile might be practicable, and orders were soon sent to the British military authorities at Cairo to commence arrangements by the purchase of some thousands of camels; while in England active preparations were soon made for the accumulation and despatch of various kinds of stores and equipments for a considerable force.

These preparations and the remarkable story of the expeditions of the Nile and the desert columns will commence a fresh page. We cannot, however, close the present chapter without referring to the additional responsibility cast upon the government by the necessity for dealing with the still vexed question of Egyptian finance.

The year 1883 had opened with a floating debt
and cash in hand £396,000, but for that year the ex
£5,972,000, or £1,635,000 in excess; the cost of
occupation being estimated at £425,000, the ex
Soudan expedition at £500,000, the awards and ex
indemnity commission for sums below £200 each
the deficiencies on Domains and Daira revenue £260,000; so
loans effected to meet the further deficit amounted to £2,
against a cash balance of £200,000.

In 1884 the new administration of Lower Egypt create
beginning of the year made much progress, and many
reforms were instituted under the direction of English c
though Mr. Clifford Lloyd could not work harmoniously
Nubar Pasha, who procured his dismissal from office. Mr. Ll
then returned to England and published an account of
condition of Egyptian prisons and the gross injustices of v
they were made the scenes by persons in power, who incarcera
victims for the purpose of extorting money or for the gratificat
of private vengeance. It may be understood, however, that th
disclosures chiefly referred to the period, already mentioned
these pages, during the investigation by English officers, who,
however, had no permanent authority sufficient to prevent the
recurrence of some of the evils complained of when once the
inquiry demanded at the time of the trial of the prisoners con-
cerned in Arabi's rebellion had been made, and those prisoners had
been sentenced or acquitted.

In the beginning of March (1884) the indemnity commission appointed to investigate claims for property destroyed in the burning of Alexandria closed its sittings, the awards amounting in all to above four millions and a quarter. The cost of the endeavour to hold the Soudan and to suppress the insurrection was estimated at about a million and a half, and the current administrative charges had considerably exceeded the available revenue, while a large increase had been necessary for works of irrigation. To sum up the situation, the Egyptian government had to provide about £8,000,000, the accumulated deficits and

liabilities of 1881, 1882, and 1883, including the cost of necessary works of irrigation; and the estimates of 1884 showed a further deficit of above £500,000. The assigned revenues, over which the government had no control, showed a probable surplus in 1884 of £400,000.

To raise the sum of £8,000,000 would require an amendment of the law of liquidation with the consent of the great powers and of the sultan. A careful and elaborate report was therefore ordered to be drawn up by Sir Evelyn Baring, Sir R. E. Welby, Sir C. Rivers Wilson, and Sir J. Carmichael, and this financial statement was sent to the great powers on the 22d of April, with a circular despatch, inviting them to a conference in London for the purpose of arranging the financial system of Egypt, and providing for present and future demands. The intimation sent to France elicited a prompt and friendly reply from the French government, which had been officially silent on Egyptian affairs since the abolition of the dual control. It now frankly said that the abolition of that control would not be further contested, and invited the British government to explain its plans for the pacification and future government of Egypt. There is no need to follow the somewhat tedious proceedings of the conference which met, but could come to no complete conclusion, and separated without having definitely effected any improvement or adopted any scheme. The actual result was that the British government had to grapple with the situation, since it became a part of the duty that had devolved on them because of the occupation of the Nile by British troops, before the close of the discussions. France was unable or unwilling to agree to the financial proposals made by England, and there seemed to be little or no probability of the representatives of the powers coming to an understanding, and therefore the conference separated; the British government regained its liberty of action, and the ministry resolved to send Lord Northbrook to Egypt as High Commissioner to inquire into the financial condition of the country, and form a scheme drawn up as an official report to the government. At the same time (on the 5th of August) a vote of credit for £300,000 was obtained by the

ministry from parliament for the purpose of making "preparations" as distinct from "operations" for the possible despatch of an expedition to Khartûm; and while Lord Northbrook went to investigate the financial condition of the country, Lord Wolseley accompanied him to examine and report on the military situation. When they reached Alexandria the reception accorded to Lord Northbrook and Lord Wolseley was enthusiastic, but it was also marked by a certain degree of ceremonial, the war-ships being drawn up in two lines on either side of the harbour to salute.

On the journey from Alexandria to Cairo General Lord Wolseley and Generals Stephenson and Dormer travelled together in a first-class carriage; Lord Northbrook and his secretary having a special saloon, in which were also Sir Evelyn Baring, Nubar Pasha, and General Egerton.

General Earle, as senior officer, introduced the various officers and native officials to Lord Northbrook, who shook hands cordially with all. On the platform were drawn up a guard of honour, consisting of fifty of the Black Watch, with their band, and an escort of the 19th Hussars, who accompanied Lord Northbrook and Sir Evelyn Baring to their residence. Lord Wolseley drove direct to the Kasr en Nuzha Palace.

There was an immense crowd at the station, and all the ministers and members of the headquarters staff were present in full uniform. General Lord Wolseley almost immediately afterwards announced that he should remain at Cairo for some time to look about him; and he took care to make himself acquainted with the details requisite for an expedition to Khartûm, so that by the time that an advance by the Nile had been determined on, and before he set off for Wady Halfa on the 5th of October, every part of the river up to the second cataract was a scene of busy preparation.

## CHAPTER VII.

A Stir at Assouan. Reinforcements. Explorations. Active Preparations in England. Proposed Expedition to Rescue Gordon. By Rail or River? The Nile Route. Boats and Cataracts. Wady Halfa. Debbeh. Wolseley reaches Korti. The Camp. Plan of Campaign. Sir Herbert Stewart. Sir Charles Wilson and the Desert Column. General Earle and the Nile Column. The Story of Massacre of Stewart and Power. Across the Desert to Metammeh. Gakdul Wells. Battle of Abu-Klea. Battle of Gubat. On the Look-out for Khartûm.

It had become evident before the end of May, 1884, that some expedition for the relief of General Gordon had been decided on, and everybody was inquiring to what extent the preparations which were being made might be interpreted to mean the despatch of British forces towards Khartûm. After the experiences with Egyptian troops it was thought exceedingly unlikely that they alone would be sent, and it was believed that their sole employment, even for the protection of the frontier, would be a mistake should the Mahdi attempt to move by Dongola and towards Cairo. Colonel Fred. Burnaby wrote to the *Standard* on the 23d of May on this subject, saying:—"Many Cairo-inspired paragraphs have recently appeared calling attention to the efficiency of the Egyptian army. I am well aware that General Wood's English officers, who are very gallant and able men, are longing to take part in a military movement in the Soudan. By all means let them be employed, but for Heaven's sake do not imperil a Gordon Relief Expedition by making use of their Egyptian soldiers—men who look well on parade, have handsome uniforms, and cost the unfortunate fellahs two hundred thousand pounds per annum—men who can do everything but the one thing essential, viz. fight. They were not sent to the Soudan to relieve Tokar and Sinkat for reasons which Sir E. Wood may perhaps explain. The gendarmerie, it is to be presumed, was considered in January last a better force than the Egyptian army. We all know what became of Baker's troops. Let us not endanger a British expedition to Khartûm by employing Egyptians in order to gratify the vanity of English officials at Cairo.'

On the 14th of May Sir Samuel Baker, in a lor er to th *Times*, had reminded the public that he had said th reat Khartûm could not be effected, that it was the key point upon which the safety of Lower Egypt must d end, a its evacuation was a political blunder and a practical impos '. He advocated an immediate change of front, the m ion the declaration of abandonment and a proclamation of a geograp cal definition of the territory of Egypt: the country to be into two provinces—Upper and Lower Egypt. "The Lower Egypt to extend south as far as Assouan; that Egypt to latitude 13 degrees, and to embrace the Sennâr between the White and Blue Niles. The White Nile would the well-defined western boundary. The eastern boundary w be the Atbara River from Gellabat upon the Abyssinian frontie to the Red Sea. Thus, although the Soudan should be abandone and the geographical term should be eradicated from the territory of Egypt, the frontiers of Upper Egypt should be so absolutel defined as to remain without doubt or question. Khartûm sho be the capital of Upper Egypt, and Kassala, Gellabat, Sennâ Berber, and Dongola would represent the chief centres and principal towns of the newly constituted provinces. A viceroy, nominated by the khedive, should represent the government, assisted by a council."

He believed that if this proclamation were made immediately, and that 3000 Indian troops were landed at once at Suakim with reserves at Bombay, the black troops reorganized in Lower Egypt and marched to Berber, and preparations were made for an expedition of 10,000 men directly the rise of the Nile permitted navigation from Cairo to Dongola and south to Berber and Khartûm, many of the tribes would return to their allegiance and the relief of Khartûm and the suppression of the Mahdi's rebellion might be effected. This opinion is worth attention even now, but events at that time had moved more quickly than even Sir S. Baker knew; and Berber was about to fall.

It was declared on all hands that if nothing was to be done beyond increasing the Egyptian troops at Wady Halfa, sending

a contingent up the river, and ordering a "patrol" of the Nile, very little effect would be produced; but though Colonel Trotter, who took the command there, turned out the Bashi-Bazouks from the fortress, took possession of all arms and ammunition, and strengthened and provisioned the strongest building at the station, these movements were rather against the disaffected soldiers there and at Dongola, than for the purpose of resisting any threatened force of the Mahdi's followers. It had been said, too, in a former telegram to the foreign office from Gordon himself that the rebels did not invade their neighbours' soil, but spread the rebellion by stirring up each tribe to revolt in its own territory. On the other hand there were certain reports of an intention on the part of the Mahdi to march along the White Nile, and the Mudir of Dongola was already pretty busy in holding his own. For some time he was suspected of playing a double game, and doubts were all along entertained of his professed loyalty, but he was compelled to act in such a way so as to deceive the Mahdi, until he was strong enough to declare himself, and having been supplied with arms and ammunition, fought the Shaggiyeh rebels and defeated them in several engagements. He divided his forces, some going along the bank and the others with him by boats and a steamer on the river. It may very well be understood that as his men were armed with Remington rifles and had artillery, the rebellious Arabs on the banks had not much chance, and that at Debbeh, Amboukol, and Merauwee, they were defeated and a considerable number killed, though the mudir only had about 1200 men altogether, and was anxiously waiting for reinforcements from Wady Halfa. The mudir also appears to have claimed to be a holy personage, and some of his followers were ready to give him credit for miraculous powers, as they represented that he stood between the two hostile forces with a stick only in his hand encouraging his men, and telling them not to be afraid. This looked as though he had heard something about General Gordon's disregard of danger and desired to emulate it; but the report went further, and represented him as catching the bullets of the rebels and hurling them back with remarkable effect. The mudir had received an embassy and

letter from the Mahdi, saying that he would appoint him as his mudir, but that all the people must become Moslems, abstain from tobacco, and wear the uniform of the Mahdi, which consisted of a dress resembling an assemblage of parti-coloured rags sewn together. The mudir's own account was that having no news whether any aid was coming to him from the government at Cairo or from the British officers, he telegraphed for assistance, at the same time pretending to accept the terms offered by the Mahdi's envoys, to satisfy whom he had the doors of the Coptic church closed, and sending for the Christians told them of the Mahdi's orders. In the evening he sent for two or three Europeans, among them (as was alleged) a newspaper correspondent, and privately telling them of the dangerous position in which he was placed, advised them for their own safety to go through the form of becoming Mahometans, at the same time telling them, "Of course you can keep your own religion in your hearts." They accepted his advice, and the next morning, being taken before the Deputy-Governor and the Cadi, and declaring that they were prepared to become Mussulmans, repeated three times the phrase, "God is God and Mahomet is the prophet of God," with three or four similar phrases, when they were dismissed and were not afterwards molested. The mudir added to this story that all the Copts had followed this example. Whether this was true or not, or whether the mudir ever told it or not, he certainly showed some loyalty to us in the subsequent campaign, and when the expedition was being completed in the autumn, collected a number of boats, 500 camels, and 1200 or 1500 men to assist the government steamers up the cataracts.

But in May nobody knew what would be done. There was a good deal of exploration. Captain Marriott, afterwards in command of the Egyptian camel corps, went up the river, Major Kitchener to Korosko, Colonel Stuart Wortley to Assiout, and thence through the desert to El Khorgeh, to Makio, and to Sheb, opposite Korosko, where it was said he was to form a permanent outpost of Bedouins, with an advanced post at Selimah. It was soon known that these were only preliminaries, and that active operations were likely to follow.

The army of occupation in Egypt consisted of one cavalry regiment (19th Hussars), eight and a half battalions of the line, five batteries of the royal artillery, two companies of the royal engineers, one company of the ordnance store corps, and detachments of the commissariat and transport and army hospital corps. There were then only about 7000 men under General Stephenson ready for active service, some of the regiments being rather weak owing to invalids, loss of time-expired men, &c. Drafts were, however, ordered for the purpose of reinforcing these corps up to regulation strength.

Colonel Duncan, who commanded the troops in Upper Egypt and stationed at Assouan, had his force increased, so that they consisted of a regiment of cavalry, two camel batteries, ten guns of position, five battalions of infantry, a camel corps, and some mounted infantry, the whole belonging to the army of Sir Evelyn Wood, who was to visit Assouan, while on the completion of the defensive works there, Colonel Duncan was to move forward to take personal command of the advanced posts at Korosko and Wady Halfa. About 1500 friendly Arabs, under Major Kitchener and Major Russell acted as outposts to this force at Korosko, with desert parties towards Abu Hamed and the Red Sea.

On the 23d of May it was said here that preparations were being made at Woolwich for sending a pontoon equipment to Egypt for the service of the expedition to Khartûm, and the royal engineers were required to furnish a troop of officers and men well skilled in the construction of bridges, to take charge of the pontoon train in the journey up the Nile. Several improvements in the construction and conveyance of pontoons had been effected at the royal arsenal, and all parts of the carriage upon which they were packed, as well as the floats themselves, were contrived so as to be of use in crossing the rivers and streams which might intercept the march of an army. At the commissariat storehouse extra labour had been engaged, and the soldier-workmen were actively employed in packing provisions of all kinds in boxes and barrels of not more than 200 lbs. weight each, according to the invariable

rule of the department for mule carriage. Large stores of hay, mostly pressed, were at the dockyard.

Another significant provision was the adapta of two Messrs. Cook & Sons' steamers on the Nile to se armed cruisers under the command of Captain e steamer with a crew of fifteen to twenty men, and a Gardner gun raised on a platform at a considerable he the water line. During his progress up the river Captain stopped at several places between Cairo and Assouan ceived with a great show of cordiality by the natives. steamers were afterwards equipped and also placed under h mand, to cruise between the cataracts; and this demonstrati vigilance probably had a good effect in more than one dire for there were rumours of disaffection and of the existence of sec societies in Cairo itself; and this was said to explain a demor tion made on the morning of the 5th of June by the whole or ne British force in the city; the troops rapidly occupying the princ thoroughfares, bazaars, and bridges, all the sentries being doub and parties being told off to examine the vaults of the citadel consequence (it was said) of a report that an attempt was to be made to blow up the place.

Among other dangers which threatened was that of the mutiny of a Turkish battalion which had been stationed at Cairo and was ordered to go to Assouan. Fortunately it was under the command of English officers, and in endeavouring to intimidate their colonel —Colonel Grant—they found that they had not counted the cost of threatening, as they might successfully have threatened an Egyptian commander. They were turbulent and unruly ruffians while in barracks, and when ordered to leave refused to allow the black troops to take over the quarters which they were about to vacate, until they received an advance of three months' pay at £4 a month, their engagement being only for 30*s*. This was refused by the government, but finally the officers promised one month's pay on their arrival at Assiout. Out of 200 paraded at Cairo only 80 arrived at Assiout. On the way they had fired ball-cartridges out of the train, and two of them jumped out and

were killed. On arriving at Assiout a number of the men under ringleaders refused to embark for Assouan, and threatened to seize the ammunition unless they received three months' pay in advance. The officers, however, with the aid of the native police transferred the ammunition boxes from the train to the station. Thirty of the men made off and reached the left bank of the river, to which Colonel Grant crossed accompanied by five native policemen, and found the deserters in the house of a village sheikh which he entered. The Turks made a rush for their arms, but he used his revolver and wounded two of them. The others, meanwhile, had seized their rifles and run out to the open space, where they formed in skirmishing order and began to fire at their colonel, who, however, returned their fire with such coolness that they were cowed, and ultimately laid down their arms and were conveyed to prison. The remaining men of the battalion mutinied the same evening, refusing to go to Assouan; but twenty-five men of the Cornwall regiment, who had arrived at Assiout, made short work of disarming the whole battalion, and ten of the ringleaders were sent off to Cairo under an Egyptian guard.

This incident was not calculated to impress our officers with the advantage of employing Turkish troops, who apparently had as much objection to probable service in the Soudan as the Egyptians themselves.

There was no time to waste over mutinous troops, for active preparations were made for the defence of the Egyptian frontier and the extension of the outposts and stations preliminary to that advance towards Khartûm which was now considered certain, though neither the complete organization of the expedition that was to be sent, nor the route which it was to take, seemed to have been decided.

There were, in fact, four alternative routes by which to reach Khartûm, viz. by way of Kassala, by Suakim and Berber, the Nile from Wady Halfa, or the Korosko desert. The choice of the first, apparently depended upon the result of the negotiations which Admiral Hewett endeavoured to accomplish with King John of Abyssinia, and at one time it seemed probable that the savage

potentate would give his assistance in clearing
holding it against the insurgent Arabs till the
Khartûm was completed and the refugees were
Abyssinia or to get to Massowa; but King John re ed
the same sort of personage as Gordon had found hi o
not be trusted to carry out his promises, besides wh wo
promise little or nothing except on the guarantee that Mas
should be handed over to him to become the port of A
Even this might have been accomplished if there had be
time, but it would have had a very doubtful result, sinc
dishonesty, cruelty, and treachery of the king and his chief
were proverbial. It was, in fact, suspected that the tai
insanity could alone account for some of his eccentric ferocities.

At any rate, no project for taking the Kassala route was concluded, and very soon it became obvious that the government was pushing forward preparations for a regular advance from Suakim, and it was with surprise, not unmixed with satisfaction, that we began to understand that preparations were being made to "sma the Mahdi" with the aid of the latest resources of civilization.

A railway was to be constructed from Suakim to Berber, and the camel would give place to the locomotive, which would be continuously at work conveying troops, arms, stores, ammunition, and water across that vast expanse of desert. The railway, which a good many people had said years before should have joined the Red Sea port with the great *entrepot* of the merchandise of Egypt, the Soudan, and the Equatorial Provinces, was now to be constructed, and though there were those who represented that during the progress of the work every yard of it would have to be watched and defended night and day, not only against the surrounding hostile tribes, but against the silting and sinking of the sand, the remarkable celerity with which the scheme was devised and the materials provided in England and transported to Suakim was regarded as a cause for considerable satisfaction.

Early in June the first freight of plant for the proposed military line consisted of seven or eight hundred tons of railway iron, and the same vessel that carried it took from Woolwich the necessary

materials for erecting huts and machinery. This first instalment would, it was thought, be sufficient for about 25 miles of railway, and it was reported that the sidings, level-crossings, and other fittings kept in store, would be sufficient for the whole line, and the small locomotives in use at the royal arsenal were pronounced most suitable for the work, chiefly on account of their easy transport and their small consumption of fuel, about 150 lbs. of coal being ample for a day's work. The railway was to be laid by native labourers, under the direction of a company of royal engineers from Alexandria and others sent from England, and a light overhead telegraph was to be erected parallel with the line for its whole length. In the composition of the force which was to form the expedition it had been determined that mounted infantry should take an important place, and a thousand saddles of a special pattern to fit the small Arab horses of the country were demanded from the harness-makers at Woolwich at the request of Captain Barrow. Returns were required of the commissariat department showing the provisions of all kinds in store, and it was believed that there was a sufficient reserve for all requirements, even with the proposed expedition in view.

The next consignment was a number of passenger trucks, each to carry twelve soldiers and a brakesman on a platform in rear. They were lightly built, with tilt covers, and open at the sides, but with stout blinds of oiled canvas on rollers, for use if necessary. Although the under carriage was fitted to the narrow gauge of 18 inches, the body of the vehicle was 6 feet wide, and the seats balanced over the wheels like those of an outside car. The goods trucks were longer, but not as wide as the passenger carriages, and were more numerous. Ordnance and commissariat stores, and a considerable freight of medical necessaries, were also sent at an early date, more than two million pounds of preserved meat and other provisions for the men forming the proposed expedition, being drawn from the reserve stores in Woolwich dockyard, together with a supply of compressed forage for the horses. India-rubber tanks were provided for holding water in the desert.

The rails (in 21-feet lengths), weighing 36 lbs. to the yard, were

to be attached to the iron sleepers by a simple grip; the slee
being formed of ¼-inch iron plates bent into an "M section
6 inches wide and 3 feet long. This form of line had been a
tested by use at the arsenal and other dockyards for conveying
heavy stores and trucks. Carriages 6 feet wide could safely
upon it with 15 or 20 horse-power engines by means of a
under-carriage in frequent joints which enabled a train to
sharp curves. It was understood that the entire line could
in a few weeks, and though no announcement was made
government the continued despatch of material and stor
Suakim was sufficient evidence that the railway so long talked o
to be constructed, and that an advance to Berber was contempla
for the rescue of Gordon and the relief of Khartûm.

There is no need further to describe the provisions made f
constructing this line, for it never was laid. Apparently in
that no time should be lost, the material had been transport on
the probability of the Suakim-Berber route being determined
and when, a few days afterwards, all efforts for concentra
supplies, guns, ammunition, and provisions were directed to
andria and Cairo, it was equally obvious that the proposed r
had been abandoned and that the expedition would go by the Nile
after all—a conclusion which was manifested by the orders given
for providing a large number of whale-boats and other vessels of
light draught suitable for the conveyance of troops and provisions
beyond the first cataracts. As a matter of fact little more was
heard of the Suakim-Berber railway. The idea of making Suakim
a base of operations was entirely relinquished, and it was soon
understood that the railway plant and materials would be reshipped
and utilized either in India or at the Cape.

On the 13th of June intelligence came from Korosko which
seemed to settle the matter of the route. According to the testi-
mony of an Arab, who said he had been captured by the rebels
in endeavouring to escape from Berber,—Cuzzi, who had escaped
with him, had turned Moslem, and had been compelled to profess
a belief in the Mahdi and to adopt his uniform of a white loose-
sleeved smock, decorated with a fancy border and three coloured

squares in front and three behind. This Arab said that 1500 men of the garrison and 2000 of the male population of the town had been slaughtered. It was also reported that the Mahdi was marching on Dongola with a vast number of followers—85,000 was the number mentioned—and that he hoped to capture the town before the sacred month of Ramadan, which would commence in twelve days.

At any rate there were serious apprehensions that this was the intention of the false prophet, and Major Kitchener was reported to have expressed the opinion that if Dongola should fall Egypt would undoubtedly be invaded, and he should devote every effort to the holding of Dongola, as otherwise the Mahdi could penetrate Egypt without touching Assouan, where, moreover, defence would be difficult. The Mahdi, it was rumoured, had announced his intention of starting on his next pilgrimage from Cairo, and Major Kitchener was reported to have said:

"I find the position much more serious than I imagined when I arrived. If the British troops go to Suakim and Berber they may reach Khartûm about the time when the Mahdi reaches Cairo. They should go by this route."

At that time the great protection against the rebels was the length of the 10-days' desert journey from Berber, while the defences made by the disposition of the troops were represented by 300 Egyptian soldiers, two English officers, two English sergeants, and one Gatling gun at Wady Halfa, where the force was to be at once augmented by the addition of another company of infantry. At Korosko there were three companies, with three English officers. At Assouan there were 1000 men and six guns, with four English officers. Other troops were rapidly being towed up the river. Between the Nile at Korosko and the Red Sea at Mergashab the frontier line of Upper Egypt was guarded by 1500 Bedouins, recruited by Majors Kitchener and Rundle. These Bedouins were taken from the three great sections of the Ababdeh tribe—the Ashabah, the Fagalla, and the Aboudeein—and had been so placed that each sub-tribe guarded its own territory. Some 140 of the Fagallas were stationed at Abu Benhah, at three hours' distance

from Abu Hamad; 60 were close to the Half-way Well at Murad; 40 were at El Bad; and 200 near Korosko. There were also 200 at Korosko, the headquarters of Majors Kitchener and Rundle, who had with them the three great sheikhs of the tribes in question. The remaining Bedouins occupied posts between the Nile and the sea. On the other bank of the stream 500 Bedouins from the Tunisian tribe of the Gowast were to leave Assiout and to form posts in the oases of Khargeh and Selimah, under Major Stuart-Wortley.

It may be imagined that considerable excitement was caused among the natives at Assiout and other places by the arrival of the British troops. When the Royal Sussex regiment, for instan took possession of their camp at Assouan on the 10th of J and the soldiers marched in single file through the narrow baz the people were amazed, and when the order was given to fix bayonets and trail arms, took to their heels and ran right and left in genuine alarm; but their fears soon subsided, and when drums began to beat and the tremendous reverberation dislo a number of dusty old jars, stuffed alligators, and other trash wl had been stowed away in some of the top shelves of the shops and brought them toppling down, the applause and laughter became general. The natives were soon to become more familiar with British troops, for it was necessary to keep a watchful eye on Dongola, and therefore to strengthen the force at Wady Halfa. Before the middle of August there was a general movement of regiments. Troops going from Simla to England on ordinary reliefs were ordered to Egypt, while others, including battalions of the Royal Irish and the East Surrey, were ordered to embark at Bombay for the Egyptian service. Several of the Turkish mutineers of Assiout were tried and sentenced to penal servitude and two of them to be shot, but the remnant of the battalion, 70 strong, commanded by their redoubtable colonel, went to Assouan by the postal steamer on the 13th of August. The Egyptian camel corps (150 men and 75 camels), under Major Marriott, embarked for the same place, and the railway was in active operation, the management of the transport service having

been confided to the agent of Messrs. Cook, the famous organizers of the "tourist" system, who, however, found that the sidings and the means for shunting and unloading the trains were exceedingly defective, and in view of a large movement of troops and military stores would be altogether inadequate.

By that time there was no longer any doubt as to the intentions of the government to send an expedition. Mere "observations" had already taken the form of "operations." On the 14th of August Captain Boordman had taken command of the flotilla of five war steamers on the Nile in place of Captain Bedford. The 56th Regiment, numbering 670 men, had arrived at Assouan at daybreak, to be enthusiastically received, and it was understood at Cairo that Sir Redvers Buller was about to leave England for Egypt to act as chief of the staff to Major-General Earle, who afterwards took command of the forces proceeding by the Nile, and known as "the Nile column." At that date, August 14th, however, it was understood that General Stephenson had been appointed to the direction of the expedition for the relief of Gordon.

The troops under orders for Wady Halfa were:—The Royal Sussex and the Essex Regiments, the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, and the South Staffordshire Regiment, a squadron of the 19th Hussars, and the Mounted Infantry, making a force of about 3000 men. Drs. Hedley, Maconachie, and Irvine being the medical staff, and chaplains Brindle and O'Neill attached. Commander Hammill, of the *Monarch*, was also attached to the expeditionary force to superintend the passing of the Nile steamers over the cataracts, with the general naval charge and superintendence over all the boats and steamers above Wady Halfa.

A gun-boat commanded by Lieutenant Reeve, R.N., was at Assouan on the 16th, and quantities of tackle for hauling steamers over the cataracts were being hurried thither. Six naval officers and 80 sailors were there with Commander Hammill, but the passage of the steamer *Nile* over the first cataract was left to the Arabs, and was nearly wrecked because of the hawser which was let go from the bank, being entangled with the paddle-wheels

while the current was running six miles an hou
were going at speed. The entangled hawser
which disabled the engines, and round swung t
in the current, upon which the Arabs let go the re
and the steamer was about to be whirled dc
unchecked by the anchor which was let go, but tc
had omitted to make fast the hawser. As tl
second anchor snapped the situation looked de
Arabs, having done their worst, prepared to swim ashor
Captain Bedford and Mr. Reid, who were on board, disco
some coils of telegraph wire, and directed the sailors to use
as anchors, or rather as grapnels, by which they were able t
hold of the rocks and eventually to bring the steamer up.
second steamer, *Benousief*, crossed in safety some days later, but
on that occasion the sailors were standing by, ready each to lend
a hand.

On the 26th Sir Redvers Buller left England for Egypt
his aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Lord F. Fitzgerald, King's F
Rifle Corps, and Lieutenant-Colonel Alleyne of the Royal A
who was appointed to special duty to superintend the fitting up
of the boats which were being rapidly built for the passage of the
Nile. Lieutenant-Colonel More, who had been serving as deputy-
adjutant quartermaster-general at headquarters, had already gone
forward to take the duty of organizing the transport. On the
following day (August 17th) several detachments left Aldershot
for Portsmouth, where they were to embark on the troop freight-
ship *Goorkha* for Alexandria. They were—Captain A. S. Stephen-
son, one serjeant, two corporals, and ninety-eight privates of the
1st Royal Highlanders; ten officers, ten serjeants, four buglers,
and two hundred rank and file of the mounted infantry, with
Lance-Serjeant Sheehan, 7th Hussars, as instructor in riding; one
warrant officer, and thirty non-commissioned officers and men of
the Commissariat and Transport Corps; Quarter-master H.
Copping and J. Mullins, with ninety-six non-commissioned officers
and men of the army hospital corps. Instructions were issued
for every man to be prepared to enter the train with his kit-bag

in his hand, so as to be ready for embarkation on arrival of the special train at Portsmouth.

The expedition was being pushed rapidly on, for it was desirable that the men should arrive and arrangements should be well forward during the cool season. In two or three days, on the arrival of the Princess Charlotte of Wales Berkshire regiments at Alexandria, eleven infantry regiments were at the disposal of General Stephenson in addition to the Royal Irish and East Surrey ordered from India. With the other corps and detachments this made a total of about 11,000 British troops in Egypt. On the 25th the *Orontes* with Major-General Earle and the 831 officers and men of the Berkshire regiment arrived at Malta from Gibraltar, and sailed on the following day for Alexandria; and on the 23d the hired transport *Goorkha* left the Royal Albert Docks, having on board nine officers and one hundred and forty-four men belonging to the Commissariat and Transport Corps. She proceeded to Portsmouth, where she embarked about five hundred and fifty troops.

It need hardly be said that numerous applications were made to the war office by officers who desired to go to Egypt on active service, and many of these officers were willing to serve under General Wood in the Egyptian army, but the vacancies there were comparatively few.

Of the troops under the command of Lieut.-general Sir Archibald Alison, a detachment of 101 non-commissioned officers and men of the 1st Royal Highlanders under the command of Captain A. S. Stevenson, were to go out to reinforce their comrades of "the Black Watch," and the 220 officers and men specially trained as mounted infantry were selected from various regiments and were to be reinforced strongly by six officers and 161 men. The detachment of the transport and commissariat corps included one warrant officer and 30 non-commissioned officers and men, while it was understood that 200 men of the royal engineers would proceed to Egypt in about a week following. The army hospital corps consisted of 98 men of all ranks, who were specially selected after medical examination; but this department was afterwards

largely increased, the bearer company consisting of eight medical officers, two quarter-masters, and 213 army hospital men, most of whom embarked, with the ordnance, commissariat, and transport corps, in the *Anglian*, which took from the arsenal at Woolwich sixteen tons of medicines. It is to be noted that the arrangements made for the medical and surgical care of the expedition were ample and the organization was complete, as might have been expected from the knowledge and experience of the principal officers: Administrative Deputy-surgeon O'Nial, C.B. and Surgeon-general Irvine, the principal medical officer, who had left Egypt to go home on leave, and now returned to take medical charge of the expeditionary troops. The number of the hospital corps, including those already in Egypt, was stated to be three hundred, and the staff of efficient regular medical officers was so complete that it was calculated there would be five to every thousand men, the full proportion provided in an Indian campaign. The provision also included a case of medical comforts for each of the four hundred small boats constructed for the Nile journey. The number of these boats was, however, afterwards increased to 800, which had also to be provided with their regular equipments, arms, and provisions. Four lady nurses were also to go with the medical department as nursing sisters from the Herbert Hospital and the Guards Hospital, and these were afterwards on duty at the stationary hospital at Wady Halfa.

It is not professed that the troops mentioned include every draft made for the expeditionary force up to the end of August, but enough has been said to show not only that a considerable number of men, including those from India and the East Indies, had been rapidly despatched to the Nile that they might thence go to Dongola, but that the force was varied in character, including men trained to all kinds of service, and most of them prompt in resource and capable of adapting themselves to almost any circumstances of a campaign.

It is not necessary here to enter upon further details of the regiments from which they were selected; and though by the time they had reached Egypt the general nature of the proposed opera-

tions had probably been decided, it was not till the last days of August that the public generally was aware that Lord Wolseley himself was on the way to take the chief command.

That there was to be an advance by the Nile was, however, obvious enough, for orders had already been given for the construction of some hundreds of small boats resembling whale-boats, by which the troops were to be conveyed; and it was rumoured that 500 Canadian boatmen were to be enlisted, whose experience of the rapids would enable them to navigate these vessels past the Nile cataracts.

The engagement of these Canadian "voyageurs" was said to have been due to Lord Wolseley's experiences on the Red River, and they were promptly enlisted for the special service required of them. As labourers or rowers to assist in navigating the boats, 300 Kroomen from the west coast of Africa were also engaged, and were expected to arrive at about the same time as the Canadians, in the first week in October. The voyageurs were engaged in various parts of Canada, and, under the command of Colonel Denison, embarked on board the *Ocean King* at Quebec, whence they went to Sydney, Cape Breton, for coal. Some of the men got ashore there and delayed the voyage because they could not be found: but they reached Alexandria on the 7th of October after again coaling at Gibraltar. The vessels which these men were to navigate were chiefly the small boats already mentioned; but there were also some hundreds of Nile boatmen engaged for the tug-steamers, dahabeeahs, Nile nuggars, like half a walnut shell in shape, luggage-steamers, launches for officers and special service, and the steam yacht or stern paddle launch for the general and the staff; a vast and diversified flotilla, which was to make the passage of the Nile in detachments, following the two or three steamers and some boats and nuggars which had already got over the second cataract. The command of the whale-boats was, of course, divided according to the detachments, Colonel Alleyne and Major Dorward (in charge of the engineers) taking the direction of two of the divisions, the latter being in command of the five boats appointed to pioneer duty, and these reached Ambugol only

SURGEON GENERAL J. O'NIAL. C.B.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

BLACKIE & SON. LONDON, GLASGOW, EDINBURGH & DUBLIN.

after a very arduous and difficult journey with mu h our a at a slow rate, so that they did not reach Dal ti November. These boats, known as the whale-bo constructed with considerable rapidity by various b the Thames, the Tyne, and the Clyde, and were d conveyed in the transport and store vessels as quickl n finished. Some of the steamers and launches were, of co sent in sections to be put together on arriving on th whale-boats were sent entire, and trials were made their complete suitability for the purpose for wh h they intended, but of their capacity for receiving the stores, arms, and various appliances which each boat was to carry besides men, who were to form a double bank of rowers. The prices the boats varied from £75 to £90 each, the higher price bei demanded at Glasgow at the yards where there would be so difficulty in completing the contract and delivering the boats London in 27 days. One of the boats, specially built at Port was the first to be experimented upon, and will serve to the general dimensions and arrangements.

Roughly speaking, the boats were to be 32 ft. in length 7 ft. beam, with a depth of 2 ft. 8 in. each, to carry sails with a 12-ft. hoist, and to be equal to the carriage of a weight of 6500 lb. The experimental boat was 30 ft. long, with a beam of 6 ft. 6 in. and a depth of 2 ft. 6 in., and was built of fir, painted white inside, with twelve oars and two long sails, her weight being about 10 cwt. It was roomy and buoyant, and with provision for awnings and other conveniences, and was fully loaded for the sake of testing its powers. A working party of seamen stowed on board 2¾ tons of commissariat stores, including biscuits, preserved meat, vegetables, lime-juice, and ammunition, it being intended to allow 850 rounds of ammunition for each of the twelve men to be carried. The provisions were estimated to last for a hundred days, the period required for going up and down the Nile. The stores were packed in oblong and square boxes, and though some difficulty was experienced in conveniently placing them in the vessel with twelve men also on board, her mean draught was

1 ft. 8 in., or 4 in. under the prescribed limit. The total weight then on board was estimated at over 3½ tons, and the boat abundantly answered all expectations, and was pronounced by the War Office and Admiralty representatives all that could be desired, though it was observed that the process of storage would have to be much less rough and ready if the rowers were to occupy seats for rowing purposes in any but the most cramped positions.

The figures eventually decided on for further orders were, that each boat, which would practically have everything on board for its own crew, and so would represent, as it were, an unit of force, should be equal to the carriage of a weight of 6700 lb., the little vessel itself to weigh 1300 lb. Each boat was supplied with awnings divided into three, with the object of giving shade when the masts were stepped, and carried twelve oars, rowing double banked. There was a crutch at the bow and stern for the purpose of steering from the stern, or, in the event of the boat turning round suddenly in a rapid, permitting of utilizing the bow oar for steering purposes. Each boat was to be constructed like an ordinary clinker-built whale-boat, and to carry six punt poles, iron-tipped.

The quantities of stores for rations, including the Chicago tinned beef, which the soldiers called "bully beef," forming the chief rations of meat, were exceedingly varied, though, as mostly happens in a campaign, many of the articles which were meant as luxuries were not very systematically distributed, and got a good deal mixed before the expedition was very far on its enterprise. According to the original intentions, though it was expected that the troops would be able to make or purchase bread occasionally, tinned meat and biscuits formed the staple provision, and for the sake of variety as well as of health the biscuit was to be of two kinds, "naval" and "cabin," the latter being slightly medicinal. The coxswain of each boat was to be a non-commissioned officer, and to have absolute command of the stores and of the discipline. He was to be provided with a spring-balance for weighing out the rations, and strictly under his charge was a box of medical

comforts, containing three bottles of brandy, three bottles of port, twelve 4-oz. tins of Liebig's extract of meat, ½ lb. of mustard, 1 lb. of yellow soap, 1 lb. of candles, ¼ lb. of salt, four tins of condensed milk, six tins of cocoa and milk, two boxes of safety-matches, ½ lb. of compressed tea, a corkscrew, and a cutter opening the tins in which every article was hermetically seal This box was only to be resorted to in case of great nece and several of the commodities kept there in reserve were furnished as articles of daily food, such as salt and tea.

The ruder necessaries of life included vegetables, and soup, flour, oatmeal, and rice, baking-powder to serve for y vinegar, pepper, and lime-juice, and herbs to flavour the s There was also a sufficient supply of common soap, a small qu of permanganate of potash for purifying purposes; a few chees for change of diet, and for those who smoked there was tob To every boat was to be assigned a 12½-gallon tank of rubber protected by a canvas cover, with straps attached carriage, and each of the ten soldiers and two sailors was to h his metal drinking-cup, his tin plate, deep enough for soup, knife, fork, and a plated spoon. For the common need of th whole boat party were provided a nest of kettles, fitting one within another, two soup ladles, two butcher's knives and a flesh fork, a baking dish, two zinc pails, three leather buckets, a frying-pan, and a flour dredger; while the more warlike equipment consisted of each man's rifle and ammunition, a pick, two felling axes, a spade and shovel for intrenching, and a tent to shelter the whole dozen men. To these must be added six boat "fenders," or buffers, a boat-hook, oars, two masts and sails, a coil of rope for towing, and a few other indispensables, and, with twelve men thrown in, there was a pretty full boat-load; indeed on the voyage afterwards it was often a squeeze for the rowers, especially if the stowage got a little deranged.

However, on the trial at Woolwich, after an hour's labour, with a good deal of coaxing and contriving, the whole of the burden was comfortably stowed away in the bottom of the boat, and space was still found for a dozen men to sit and navigate the craft,

besides finding room among the packages for their rifles and all the other necessities of their journey. It was found practicable even to take a punt in each boat, as originally ordered. To the conveniences previously provided were also added a charcoal stove for cooking. Three nets were supplied, with line and hooks, to be in charge of the Canadian boátmen. Special stores were provided for the use of the boatmen. Forty-five of the boats were to act as outlying pickets, serving such offices as videttes do in the advance of an army, some leading and feeling the way, while others guard the rear. These 45 boats were to carry red lanterns, the remainder having white lights. The force was to advance in half battalions of 500 soldiers and 100 sailors in 50 boats, each half battalion being as far as practicable one day in advance of the next.

It is remarkably suggestive of the provision made for a modern armed force to note the particulars of the millions of rations and other stores supplied: corned beef (about 500,000 lbs. from Chicago forming the chief supply), preserved fresh meat, bacon, boiled mutton, cheese, navy and cabin biscuit, flour, baking-powder, tea, coffee, sugar, salt, pepper, compressed vegetables, jam (for extra rations), lime-juice, marmalade, erbswurst (preserved soup), cocoa and milk, pickles, vinegar, rice, oatmeal, tobacco, yellow soap, embolic soap, matches, extractum carnis, Tarragona wine, preserved potatoes, brandy, rum in quantities for regular rations, a small quantity of ale and stout and a little champagne in pints, for hospital use, and tins of condensed milk. No intoxicants, except those belonging to medical comforts, were to be carried in the boats, and the tobacco was to be issued by the non-commissioned officers in charge of the stores at a charge of sixteen pence a pound. Corned beef was to be the ration for dinner four days per week; preserved fresh meat, boiled mutton, bacon, and erbswurst being served out on the other three. The pickles were to be given with the corned beef, and the jam and marmalade to relish the daily pound of biscuit or the substituted dumpling on flour days, but only at the rate of 3 oz. per man per week. The rearrangement of the rations was, however, left to the discretion of the commanding officer, who might also, if the supply were

sufficient, have extra bacon for his men instead of [illegible] mutton. The tea, sugar, &c., was supplied in quan[illegible] for daily requirements.

It should be mentioned that beside the conti[illegible] jackets a considerable force of marines were taken r[illegible] Portsmouth, and Plymouth for the Nile service, wh[illegible] also drafted from Suakim. The detachment from [illegible] army, which was to serve beyond Wady Halfa, were [illegible] and mostly negroes.

It may be added, as we have been noting the prov[illegible] victualling the troops, that "the sinews of war"—the £100,000 in gold—was sent to Lord Wolseley almost imme[illegible] after his arrival, being shipped in the steamer *Australia*, left the Albert Docks on the 24th of September along with *Deccan* to receive the camel corp and other troops at Portsm[illegible] The money arrived by railway from the Bank of England, and contained in strong boxes about a foot in length, each c[illegible] 4000 sovereigns. The boxes were lifted on board [illegible] which shot them into the hold like coals, to be pick[illegible] counted and checked, and packed away in the iron safes [illegible] bullion room. This apartment, when the hatches were do[illegible], could only be approached from a lazarette entered through the first-class saloon, and was perfectly safe from intrusion. The coin was for the pay of the troops in Egypt and for the hire of native auxiliaries. A portion only, therefore, would be debited to the special war vote. Altogether, a quarter of a million pounds was sent from the bank, £150,000 being taken to India in the *Chusan*, a fine new ship belonging, like the *Australia* and *Deccan*, to the Peninsular and Oriental Company.

The prevailing activity in our dockyards and arsensals had few signs of hurry, for there were ample stores, and though the later consignments and the boats were not completed without a rush against time, very little confusion was observable. It may be imagined, however, that, to say nothing of Alexandria and Cairo, at Assiout and Wady Halfa the scene was bewildering, and only the custom of command and the appointment of officers of

experience and ability to organize the reception and arrange for the transport of the rapidly arriving stores, could have prevented a muddle that might have assumed the aspect of a calamity.

A correspondent who was at Assiout on the 25th of September gave an interesting picture of the scene there as witnessed on the bank, or, as a Southern American would call it, the levée:—"The brown-red Nile, with a thin line of green on the farther shore, was very picturesque in the declining light, and the donkeys on the land, beaten brutally with batons, but comfortable looking withal, and carrying each a sack of wheat or flour; the hideous buffaloes —surely the lean kine of Pharaoh's dream—drawing creaking wooden-wheeled wagons, or arabas as they are called throughout the Mussulman world; the nuggar and dahabeeahs in the water receiving and giving up freight, their pointed felucca-like yards clear against the tender Eastern sky, formed a picture that can never be presented in an illustrated paper, for it needed the colour and the Babel around—the Greek, Italian, and British oaths and execrations, the Arabic gabble, the hee-haws of the donkeys, the lowing of the kine, the growls of the camels, the snorting of the postal steamer on which we go in an hour, the hurry and rush of everything, here, there, and everywhere—to give it form and semblance. But one began to get an idea of the way in which the mighty works of Egyptian antiquity were made when one saw the endless lines of men of every type toiling under loads of now two or three sticks of wood, which a boy of eight in England would think it a 'lark' to carry, or a box of compressed beef, or of tea, or of what you will, weighing from 40 lbs. to 56 lbs., in every case with precisely the same amount of apparent exertion, and in every case with precisely the same aspect of mere beasts of burden. Yet here were not only negroes from the Soudan and the Congo and the Niam Niam country—freed negroes many of them—but Turks of unmistakable type; red men—not the Iroquois we are promised, but the middle race here; simple fellaheen, Arabs of more or less pure type; and here and there a Levantine of a sort—a handsome piratical sort—Byron wrote about, which some of us have seen at Athens and Syra, and among the Archipelago, which is half

Turkish, half Hellene. The movement resembled that whi
the most casual observer notices at Port Said, or Suez, or A
or Singapore when a mail steamer is coaling; but it was far
interesting—the variety of packages, none ever being lik its
predecessor and yet all preserving some sort of order; the varie
of their bearers, the constantly-varying hue of nature now trend
towards repose, all combining to show an ensemble which r
have been represented, in a dim and distant way, on the w
the Royal Academy, but could never have been shown
artist in black and white, for the 'general shindy,' to us
expression of an Irish serjeant of a Scottish regiment, which
the essence of the scene must have been omitted. I fear I h
very imperfectly presented it; but when it is said that I
written this on my hand, by the flickering light of a Nile ste
any inelegancies will be pardoned by those who know
campaigning is."

Let us for a moment glance at the territory within whi
preparations for the expedition to Khartûm were being ca
and the protection of which against the possible descent o
Mahdi was considered essential. In previous pages we h
followed the outlines of the geography of the Nile provinces a
the Soudan, as occasion arose, to indicate the various localities mentioned in the narrative, and we now find ourselves on the river and its banks from Assiout to Assouan, Wady Halfa, and on the way to Dongola.

Assiout or Asyoot, the capital of the province of the same name and officially the residence of the governor of Upper Egypt, is on or near the site of the old "City of the Wolves," *Lycopolis*, so named from the inhabitants offering worship to Anubis or Taphera, "the watcher of the streets," the deity with the jackal head, so commonly depicted in Egyptian wall sculptures. The wolf appears to have been the sacred animal there, for mummies of wolves have frequently been found in the smaller caves and recesses or excavations of the rock. It is a considerable town, and perhaps with an outlook more picturesque than most others in Egypt. The city stands about a mile from the river, near the foot of a

mountain in which are numerous interesting grottoes and ancient remains, and is, in fact, on an island formed by a fork or branch of the main stream. This branch stream is crossed by an arched bridge built of stone, and beyond this commences the ascent of the mountain; thence fifteen minarets can be counted rising amidst groves of palm and acacia, and the view from the hills over the town of Assiout and the green plain is very charming in the early part of the year, when the almost dazzling green verdure stretches for miles on either side "unbroken," as Dean Stanley said, "save by the mud villages which here and there lie in the midst of the verdure like the marks of a soiled foot on a rich carpet." Assiout is really a fine town, with many good houses belonging to the merchants and others, exceedingly handsome baths with a beautiful marble fountain, first-rate bazaars and shops where all kinds of commodities are sold, and where the best pipe bowls in Egypt are a great feature since they are of local manufacture. There are several schools, institutions, and missions, the most important being in connection with the American consular agency.

But the caravan trade with Assiout had been declining even before the troubles in the Soudan, and the local industries—pottery and indigo-dyeing—and the commerce in cotton and opium, had considerably fallen off at the time of the occupation of the port by our "preparations." The great canal which conducts the water to the town at high tide, the fine embankment planted with handsome trees leading from the landing-place to the town, and the picturesque entrance by a grand old gateway and a large courtyard forming a part of the governor's palace, were all significant of Oriental repose, and now here was a complete topsyturveydom of European hurry and excitement, not only at El Hamra, the small village on the river-bank which claims to be the port, but at the railway station between this port and the town, at the post and telegraph office, and even in the ancient streets and sequestered places of the city itself.

Assiout is in many respects one of the most attractive towns in Egypt, and it is with regret that the visitor leaves its baths with the fine dome supported by pillars of red granite, and fountain and

pavements of white marble, its market, and lively, though narrow and unpaved, streets, as are all streets in all Egyptian towns, its well-stocked bazaars, and its outskirts, especially the mountain above the town where are the grottoes cut out of the limestone rock, and the tombs and catacombs. Most notable is the tomb of the Arab chief Antar who lived in the XIIIth dynasty, and door of whose last resting-place on earth is guarded by colo sculptured likenesses of himself, while within the catacomb i elegantly ornamented vaulted ceiling, and a large room cc sculptured figures representing some festive or ceremonial vance. Sundry small chambers bear the marks of having served as lodgings for the peasants of the locality, who have the walls blackened with smoke, though it may be rememl that the tombs on the mountain at Assiout were once the a or rather the refuge, of many of the early Christians, who thither either to be out of the way of molestation or to liv seclusion.

It does not come within the scope of these pages to des the various towns and villages in the valley of the Nile o Nile route from Assiout to the first cataract at Assouan. are some considerable towns not very far from the banks of the river, and many villages, some of them picturesque, and where they are inhabited by Copts moderately clean and tidy, while several of them lie amidst fertile and verdant land, and are made pleasant by groves of date and other trees. The great attractions of Thebes, of Luxor and Philæ, need only be barely referred to here, for they come within the scheme of every voyager who visits Cairo with the object of going at all events as far as the first cataract by the Nile steamers provided for tourists, or by the dayabeeah or river boat hired by the dragoman for a private pleasure party.

Assouan itself, the frontier town of Egypt proper, on the right bank of the Nile, and on the site of the ancient Syene, with its arid and bare surroundings and its adjacent quarries, has already been referred to; and here the organized movement of the expedition may be said to have commenced 580 miles from Cairo.

From the first cataract it is about 110 miles of river journey to Korosko, the starting-point, as we have seen, for the journey across the desert to Abu Hamed, and thence the river is obstructed by many rocky shoals and has in its centre large sand-banks, where the crocodiles often bask. The great bend of the river makes the course between Korosko and Derr S.S.E., so that the boats are often hung up on the voyage, and if a north wind is blowing can make no headway at all. The journey from Korosko to Wady Halfa, another hundred miles, includes a good many places of interest, the most important of which is, of course, Abu Simbel, where the temples hewn in the gritstone rock, and especially the vast façade of the great temple with its superb colossal figures and marvellous sculptured ornamentation, are the most interesting monuments in Nubia. The whole of this district, including Ferâyg, opposite Abu Simnel and Forras on the west bank, is full of marvellously suggestive remains: temples, tombs, tablets, columns, grottoes, and at Ferâyg the small excavated temple, consisting of a hall supported by four columns, two side chambers or wings, and an adytum, had, ages after it had been formed, become a Christian church, and on the ceiling may be seen paintings of Christ blessing St. George, who is spearing the dragon. It is not easy to imagine the strange effect of the rapid rush and turmoil of a modern force of armed English soldiers and sailors making its way amidst what is usually a still and silent scene—the solemn relics of the old world—the stories of tomb and temple, and of those to whom they were dedicated, written on the walls themselves in a language of enigma. It is not easy to picture the uproar and bustle on the banks at those places where consignments of stores, arms, and accoutrements were collected: the shouting and clangour, the tramping and general confusion in towns which, in ordinary times, may have some periodical fair or market to suit the coming and going of caravans across the desert, but around which the dust of ages has gathered upon ruins devoted to the owls and the bats.

At Wady Halfa, a good-sized irregular village with a dreary desolate outlook, but lying in a belt of palms and separated from

the deep channel of the river by several sand-banks, this bustle and confusion was for a time concentrated, until a new kind of order was evolved from the chaos of boats, bales, cases, casks, forage tents, and the agglomeration of stores and appliances that belong to a campaign, till something like a regular camp or station and military discipline is established.

It might be convenient if the reader would at this point of the narrative glance at the map in order to take in the bearings of the country, the windings of the Nile, and the situation of the cataracts as far as Abu Hamed. Southw the first cataract lies Lower Nubia, a mere strip of arable watered by the river, the cultivation nowhere exceeding four and at several points disappearing into the desert, which on east extends to the Red Sea, where Suakim is the only pract port; while on the west is the continuation of the Lybian which flanks the actual territory of Egypt. Nubia proper the Wadi Kunuz and the Wadi Nuba) extends from Assouar Lebua and thence to Dongola. Granite and sandstone the greater part of the valley, in many places closing in so that up to Wady Halfa cultivation is confined to the n banks of the Nile. At Wady Halfa the second cataract begins and extends for 100 miles in a series of rapids through the Dar el Hajar to Sukkût, where the valley widens and the sterility disappears. Fertile plains stretch out on both sides, and well-cultivated islands are to be seen in the river. Here the Nile seldom overflows, and artificial irrigation is necessary. Cultivation continues up to the third cataract, but contracts again on passing the island of Argo. At Ordu or New Dongola, Lower Nubia terminates, and the *Belad es Sudan*, or Country of the Blacks, begins.

Such is the concise and clear reference to this territory in the report issued from the War-office by the intelligence branch (quarter master-generals' department, Horse-guards); and the mention of this admirably compiled report reminds us of the lamented Colonel Stewart, who took so prominent a part in furnishing the particulars from his own accurate and untiring

observations. It was to Dongola that the expedition was to be first directed, a country of which M'Coan speaks as one of the finest of the Soudan provinces, whose southern districts are within the zone of the annual rains, while it is washed northward by the overflow of the Nile over the area known as Wady Jaijar or Great Dongolese plain. By the great curve of the river, which begins some miles above old Dongola, is inclosed a peninsula, often misnamed the desert of Bayuda or the Bayuda desert. This, though greatly affected by the insurrection in the Soudan, was properly a fairly inhabited territory peopled by several tribes, who reared large flocks of sheep, goats, and camels, and cultivated considerable tracts of land. It was across this district, on the line of the wells, from Korti, beyond Ambukol and the third cataract, where a camp had been formed for the whole force, that the column commanded by the gallant Sir Herbert Stewart afterwards crossed the peninsula to Abu Klea and Gukdal, and so striking the Nile again by Gubat Metammeh and Abu Kru, hastened, as it was believed, to the relief of Gordon at Khartûm—a story to which we shall presently have to give our attention.

In the great curve of the river (the difficult journey round which and the weary work of passing the cataracts is saved by the march straight across) the country of the Berbers is passed, —another fertile tract, to the south-east of which lies the province of Toka, already noticed as one of the most productive portions of Egyptian territory. Of the other provinces belonging to the Soudan we have already noted some particulars in earlier pages.

The first cataract at Assouan does not present any great difficulties at any season. At high Nile boats may sail up with a favourable wind, and even at low Nile 30-ton boats can be towed up;—the Nile steamers passing from the months of August to January;—but at low Nile the dayabeeahs and nuggars usually discharge both ascending and descending. Between the first and second cataracts navigation is practicable all the year round, but at low Nile constant vigilance is necessary for avoiding the numerous sand-banks, and the passage of sailing boats is uncertain, because

they have to depend on the direction of the wi
Halfa, however, water transport of an ordinary ki
to cease. The cataract itself is nine miles in
passages are narrow, winding, and dangerous.
Nile, though the passage may be made, there is c
and good pilotage is required, so that as the high
there about the third week in June, and only lasts
during which alone boats of small draft can pass, the
almost insuperable, even to steamers drawing only thre
for this short period. The Nile valley between
second cataracts is only about a quarter of a m
the narrow strip of cultivation on the banks extends a
reddish-coloured desert studded with black rocks. T
between the second and third cataract (at Hannek) is only
able at high Nile. At the head of the cataract, at the v
Haffir, the river flows in a broad bed between banks of the
and best-cultivated land in Egypt; but between Wady
Saye Island in Dar-Sukkût, a distance of 140 miles,
reaching the third cataract at Hannek, there are
cataracts, of which two are impassable at low Nile and d
high Nile, and the distance between Wady Halfa and Hanne
about 241 miles. The fourth cataract is above Barkal, and in the long journey between this and Abu Hamed, where there is the almost impassable cataract of Mogru Island, five miles long, there are 140 miles quite impassable at low Nile, and only to be passed by small boats at high Nile. Within this distance there are seven distinct cataracts known as the Cataracts of Shaikeyeh. Abu Hamed is, so to speak, the turning-point of the great loop of the river which incloses the Bayuda territory, and the stream then returns, and after the two cataracts of Abrashim and Bergerr reaches the fifth cataract at Drekeh and arrives at Berber, and so goes beyond the Atbara river to Shendy, and thence by the sixth cataract to Khartûm. The journey from Berber to Khartûm is 204 miles; the distance from Korosko to Berber, 766 miles; the entire distance by the Nile from Cairo to Khartûm, 1629 miles; while by the desert Korosko to Berber is 363 miles; and the desert

journey on the Red Sea side from Suakim to Berber is 250 miles, 100 miles of which is without water.

By the Nile from Wady Halfa to Barkal the distance is about 465 miles, and above Wady Halfa the character of the Nile valley changes completely, and the desert, instead of approaching the banks only at intervals, now makes a close boundary, and at distances of ten or twenty miles the verdant spots are formed by a series of patches of the black mud deposited by the river, and carefully cultivated with beans, lentils, or dhurra, according to their extent. At Okma the mountains of the eastern chain approach to the bank and form a series of rocky islands and rapids; while near the island of Kulb the Lybian chain closes in and the banks are rocky and steep, rising to a height of about 80 feet. Towards Sukkût, however, about 100 miles above the second cataract, the valley widens, and instead of dreary sterility there are fertile plains on both sides, and there are also well-cultivated islands, for in its course from Assouan to Barkal the Nile forms a number of islands, some of them of considerable size, notably Argo, between Hannek and New Dongola, about thirty miles in length. Between the second and third cataracts are the basaltic rock of Sarras, 150 feet high, and with an old castle on its summit; Murki, an eminence of somewhat similar appearance; and some two miles above, Mongolfi, and then successively Tommuka, Naoni, Sanniet, and Mushab. The cultivated plains are not dependent on the overflows of the Nile,—which are not frequent in that part,—but are irrigated in the usual Egyptian manner. At the third cataract the cultivated areas are contracted, but at the island of Argo open out on the left bank to a fertile plain extending two or three miles from the river to a low ridge of sandstone hills. The alluvial plain then gradually narrows again, and at Hannek the sandstone hills on the west come down to the river bank, and this continues to Shaba, above which only a fringe of cultivation extends as far as Old Dongola, when fertility broadens out again. Both above and below Debbeh the land on the left bank is rich with luxuriant crops, while on the right are only shifting sand dunes with an occasional narrow strip of green. The Nubian sandstone, which

is the geological formation of the Nile valley abo y F
soon gives place to granite, basalt, and volcanic r
again succeeded by sandstone, which, however, disa
about 150 miles above Wady Halfa, where it was e i enc
to bridge the river for the line of the Soudan rail re a
found traps, schists, and slates; and the bed river
composed of schistose rocks, which frequently appe ve
These are succeeded by granite and porphyry form ion up
third cataract, when the sandstone appears again. It m
be imagined that the rocks scattered about the river
greatly to the danger of navigation.

New Dongola, a town of mean appearance on the left b
the river, is important because of its situation. The merch
is chiefly ivory, gum, and senna, brought from the Blue and
Niles, by numerous vessels which discharge their cargoes at
at the head of the third cataract, whence the consignments are carried
overland to Wady Halfa. The country around New Dong
fertile, and the crops are abundant wherever the land is
cultivated. Old Dongola is on the right bank on the sum t
a high rock, but it is now a place of no importance and is al
a ruin. The Nile there is about 700 yards wide. Debbeh, a few
miles above it on the left bank, is another place, which, though
insignificant as a town, is in the midst of rich and productive land,
and therefore a considerable population, and is, or was, the place to
which gum and ivory were brought from the interior, and to which
European goods arrived to be distributed onward to Khartûm,
Kordofan, and Darfûr. This business was, of course, suspended
because of the disturbed state of the country, and it is doubtful
whether it will be recovered.

We have now, so to speak, reached the point where the Nile
commences to turn to form the great loop, and from Debbeh we
come to Ambukol, Korti, and the Shaikeyeh district, north of the
so-called "Bayuda desert," a district which was formerly a kind of
military republic. The Shaikeyehs or Shaggeyihs, famous horse-
men and with famous Arab horses, offered a determined resistance
to the mission by Ismail Pasha and to the Egyptian troops who

were brought against them, and they have been referred to more than once in the present narrative. It was at Korti, the chief town of Shaikeyeh, that, as we have just noted, General Lord Wolseley formed his camp, and it was determined that from Korti a double expedition should be despatched, the desert column commanded by General Sir Herbert Stewart to cross the Bayuda district to Metammeh, and a Nile column commanded by General Earle to proceed to Abu Hamed and thence towards Berber, with a view to co-operating with the desert column, for the relief of Gordon at Khartûm.

When it is considered that the Nile journey had to be made by these forces chiefly in the so-called whale-boats, each of the 800 boats carrying its own provisions, clothing, appliances, arms, ammunition, and 1200 days' rations, or 100 days' food for the twelve men who formed the crew, it may be very well believed that the task was a stupendous one, and that the ten soldiers had their work to do in "tracking" the boats from the land, or rowing and towing, or hauling them across the rapids, no less than the two sailors, one of whom was the Canadian voyageur, who had to direct the navigation of the vessel. Of course there were numbers of natives engaged to help in the towing and hauling, and at Wady Halfa a large force of men were kept at work, so that the boats were rapidly passed beyond the second cataract in detachments; the labour having been greatly aided by the construction, by Lord Charles Beresford, of a portage nearly 2500 yards in length, the boats being passed along by parties of men thirty-five strong, who with the help of rollers and levers were able to get the heavy boats across the portage and to avoid some of the more serious difficulties of the cataracts. The duty was extremely heavy in that climate, but from the very first our men began to work with a will and a cheerful determination to overcome obstacles which characterized them during the whole campaign, and makes the story of the British expedition in the Soudan one of the most remarkable records of courage and endurance to be found in the history of the world.

So actively was the business of transport carried on that, apart

MAJOR GENERAL SIR HERBERT STEWART, K.C.B.

COMMANDER OF THE COLUMN WHICH CROSSED THE DESERT FROM KORTI TO METEMMEH, JANUARY 1885.

BY PERMISSION FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY CHANCELLOR, DUBLIN.

BLACKIE & SON, LONDON, GLASGOW, EDINBURGH & DUBLIN.

from the whale-boats, it was calculated that all the mounted tro and guns would be able to leave Wady Halfa before the end November. The variations in different years of the period at which the Nile attains its greatest height and the differences in the time of its rise and subsidence at the various places included in the journey, added, of course, to the difficulty of making a accurate calculation, but preparations had been pushed on rapidly as possible when the expedition was once determi and the route decided, and vast quantities of stores, ammunition were accumulated before the last of the forces arrived.

On the 12th of November the official statement command then in Egypt under General Officer Command in-chief Lord Wolseley was:—military secretary, Lieutena colonel Swaine; aides-de-camp, Major Wardrop, Major Cre Lieutenant Childers, Lieutenant Adye, and Captain Lord Beresford; chief of staff, Major-general Buller; aide-de-ca Lieutenant Lord Fitzgerald; acting-adjutants and quarterma general, Golonel Furse and Colonel W. F. Butler; deputy-a adjutant and quartermaster-general, Lieutenant-colonel Alley, brigadier-general, Major-general W. O. Lennox; aide-de-camp, Captain B. Holme; brigade-major, Lieutenant-colonel R. W. Gordon; brigadier-general, Major-general Davis; aide-de-camp, Lieutenant-colonel C. Douglas; brigade-major, Lieutenant-colonel T. B. Hitchcock; brigadier-general, Major-general Lyon-Fremantle; aide-de-camp, Captain Hon. F. W. Stopford; brigade-major, Lieutenant-colonel W. F. Kelly. Cavalry, 19th Hussars. Artillery—B Brigade, C Battery; 2d Brigade, I Battery; 5th and 6th Batteries Scottish Division, 1st Battery Southern Division. 8th, 11th, 17th, and 26th companies Royal Engineers. Detachment of Telegraph Battalion and Field Post. 9th and 11th companies of Commissariat. C company Ordnance Store Corps. Infantry—1st battalion Royal Scots, 1st battalion Royal Irish Regiment, 1st battalion Yorkshire Regiment, 2d battalion East Surrey, 2d battalion Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, 1st battalion Royal Sussex Regiment, 1st battalion South Staffordshire Regiment, 1st battalion Royal High-

landers, 2d battalion Essex Regiment, 1st battalion Berkshire Regiment, 1st battalion Royal West Kent, 3d battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps, 1st battalion Gordon Highlanders, and 1st battalion Cameron Highlanders. Besides the above there were drafts from various regiments forming the Camel Corps.

For special service:—Colonel Sir C. W. Wilson, K.C.M.G., R.E., as head of the Intelligence Department; Colonel R. Harrison, C.B., R.E.; Colonel H. Brackenbury, C.B., R.A.; Colonel Sir H. Stewart, K.C.B., 3d Dragoons; Colonel Webber, C.B., R.E.; Colonel Henderson, King's Royal Rifles; Brevet Lieut.-colonel J. F. Maurice, R.A.; Captain Lord Airlie, 10th Hussars.

Had the Soudan railway scheme by the Nile ever been carried out, this expedition might have reached Shendy in time to retake Berber and deliver Khartûm, or we may go further and say that the whole aspect of affairs might have been different; in fact the rebellion itself might have been barred from extending to Khartûm and Berber. This, however, is only a speculation, and the completion of the line had, as we have seen, been prevented by the refusal of Gordon to have the cost of an undertaking, which had been already half frustrated, thrust upon the finances of the Soudan provinces, which he had to administer during his first governor-generalship. He had refused to be responsible for the completion of this line, and had proposed an alternative scheme for providing tramways by which the Nile traffic might be made comparatively easy, but this had never been completed, and now the line of railway, imperfect, interrupted, and inefficient, ended, as the phrase is, "in the air."[1] The southern terminus of this line was to have been at Shendy, the most convenient centre for traffic moving by the Nile, the point at which the camel routes from nearly all the fertile provinces converge, and above which the river is more or less navigable. From Shendy the line was to cross the so-called Bayûda desert, a tract well provided with water and small timber, and to reach the Nile again near Debbeh, a convenient commercial centre for Darfûr, Kordofan, and the western provinces.

[1] See vol. i. pp. 186, 187.

From Debbeh the line was to run near the Nile, along that portion of its course (about 220 miles) where the rapids known as the second and third cataracts render navigation difficult or impossible, to cross the river at Kolbe and to reach Wady Halfa, from which the river to Philæ, at the head of the first cataract, is always navigable. Thence to Assouan a short line of railway had been constructed to avoid the first cataract, and from that point water communication is open to Siout, the southern terminus of upper Egyptian railway. There are 33 miles of rails la Angash, about 4 miles north of Wady Halfa, and about 22 further of permanent way to a point within 11 miles of the As the line was left in 1878 so it is to-day. Running alo right bank of the river for some twelve miles, it leaves it the head of the "Shelal el Amka," or Second Cataract, and p along a broad inland valley, cuts off a bend of the river, a same time avoiding the broken ground of the Nile bank a rapids of Wady Matuga. From the fourteenth to the twe third mile the line again follows the river, and after ski eastern foot of some rough hills, and then again follow course of the Nile for a short distance, it once more turns striking the river at the Sarras Station, a little south of the vill of that name. Here, for all practical purposes, is at present the terminus of the line; for from this point, in order to avoid the heavy works that would have been necessitated by carrying the line along the broken and in many places precipitous river bank, the route across the Murat desert was selected.

Of course some of the difficulties of the journey were to be avoided by a certain number of men, who travelled on the short line of railway skirting the cataract at Assouan and the longer line between Wady Halfa and Sarras, while some of the stores and heavy cargo could also be conveyed for that distance, and consequently the whaler-boats assembled at Jamai (23 miles south of Wady Halfa) and then proceeded to Sarras (32 miles south of Wady Halfa) to take in stores. In October Lieutenant-colonel Alleyne, R.A., went up the Nile in whaler-boats as far as Dal (123 miles south of Wady Halfa), and reported, as he had done

also the previous month, when inspecting only, that the rapids were practicable. The voyageurs, many of whom were half-breed Indians, did their work admirably, for it was soon discovered that though they made light of the first and second cataracts the rapids of the Nile differed so much from those to which they had been accustomed, and offered so many difficult and dangerous obstructions that they needed all their experience and all their practised alacrity of eye and hand to carry the expedition to the end of the journey even in comparative safety. Each of the boats employed in the Red River expedition of 1870 carried ten men, with two or three months' provisions, and could be sailed, rowed, poled, tracked, lifted, dragged, or portaged. Between Lake Superior and Lake Winnipeg (500 to 600 miles) were fifty interruptions from rapids, over which these boats were passed. In three months a force of one battalion of infantry, some artillery, and engineers traversed the double distance (1200 miles), having carried their boats, provisions, stores, and munitions on ninety-four occasions, a total distance of fifteen miles.

The conditions of the Nile ascent were in many respects very different from those of the Red River, and more unfavourable, although the Nile has a fall of only one foot per mile, whereas the fall of the Red River is two and two-thirds feet per mile. On the Red River portages were made by felling trees on the spot, and making slides 40 to 1800 yards in length, over which the boats were pushed, and their contents carried; moreover, rocks were easily seen and avoided, the water being clear to a depth of 20 feet. On the Nile river the banks are at the rapids (Wady Halfa to Dal) precipitous on the east bank, and of shifting sand from the Libyan desert on the west bank; there is no timber, and rocks cannot be seen, the water being laden with silt.

As eventually ordered, each whaler-boat, 30 feet long, 6 feet wide, 20 inches draught, was built of fir, and weighed about 1000 lbs. The weight when fully manned and equipped was about 10·347 tons, made up as follows, the fractions being given in decimals of a ton:—Weight of boat, 0·44; two boatmen and ten soldiers, 7·5; 100 days' supplies, 2·4; one filter, 0·007.

The route to be followed in its various stages was—Cairo to Assiout, by rail, 229 miles; Assiout to Assouan, by steamer, 318 miles; Assouan to Shellal, by rail, 8 miles; Shellal to Wady Halfa, by steamer, 202 miles; Wady Halfa to Muhrat Wells, by rail, 46½ miles; Muhrat Wells to Ambukol, by desert, 15 miles; Ambukol to the foot of the Tanjor rapid, by boat; foot of the Tanjor rapid to the head, by portage, 2 miles; head of Tanjor rapid to the foot of the Dal rapid, by boat; foot of the Dal rapid to the head, by portage, 4 miles; head of the Dal rapid to the foot of the Khaibar rapid, by boat; foot of the Khaibar rapid to the head, by portage, 1½ miles; head of the Khaibar rapid to the foot of the Hannek rapid, by boat; foot of the Hannek rapid to the head, by portage, 4 miles; head of the Hannek rapid to Debbeh, by boat. The total distance from Cairo to Debbeh by the Nile is 1157 miles; deducting the distance covered by rail, steamer, and portages, as above, 830 miles, we have as the total distance traversed by laden boats 327 miles.

Along the route southwards stations were established at the following places:—Cairo, Assiout, Assouan, Shellal, Wady Halfa, Sarras, Muhrat Wells, Ambukol, Akasha, Tanjor, Sarka Matto (Dal), Absaret, Khaibar, Abu Fatmeh, Dongola, Korti. At each station was placed a commandant, his rank being generally that of colonel with staff degree. Under him were a detachment of Egyptian soldiers and a commissariat depôt for the wants of passers-by. All proceeding up the Nile took 13 days' victuals from Wady Halfa. At Cairo the commandant was called "the commandant of the base;" and there was also a lieutenant of Royal Engineers as officer in charge of the railway base. The distance between Wady Halfa and Korti being 400 miles, there was, on an average, one commandant for every 33 miles. On ascending the Nile, the whaler-boats carried each 100 days' victuals; but stores generally were sent up in this wise:—between Wady Halfa and Muhrat Wells, by rail; between Muhrat Wells and Ambukol, by camel; between Ambukol and Tanjor and between Tanjor and Sarka Matto, by convoys of whaler-boats; from Sarka Matto to Khaibar, from Khaibar to Hannek, and from

Abu Fatmeh to Korti, by native boats and by whalers. An English officer took charge of a number of whaler-boats, usually ten, manned by Dongolese, by kroomen, or by Egyptian soldiers; and with them went up and down his section of the Nile, it being his duty to see that there was no loitering and no incurring of unnecessary work. At the places of portage (Tanjor 2 miles, Sarka Matto 4 miles, Khaibar 1½ miles, Hannek 4 miles) the stores were disembarked and carried on camels. The station commandants looked sharply after the nuggars, and paid the British soldier that went in each nuggar store boat a sum of money in inverse proportion to the length of time in which he made the voyage. A nuggar is a vessel 150 ft. in length, 15 ft. in beam, 24 in. to 36 in. in draught, with flat bottom, and of about 5 to 10 tons burthen (40 to 90 camel loads). The hull is of sunt wood (*Acacia arabica*) 2 in. to 3 in. thick, secured with nails and caulked with rags and Nile mud. The mast is 35 ft. in height; the sail 50 ft. by 20 ft., of Nubian cloth, is attached to the upper and lower yard (if any); the rudder is 10 ft. in length, with a tiller beam of some 16 ft. at which ever squats or stands the reis, or one of the crew well acquainted with the currents and channels of the river. This large size of rudder is imperative, since the navigation of the rapids necessitates frequent sharp and short turns in order to avoid collision with the rocks in the channels, or to take advantage of a few yards of back eddy or other favourable water. For some time steam pinnaces patrolled all the waters from Ambukol to Abu Fatmeh; but eventually they were ordered southwards.

As early as the 28th of August the steamer *Benisouef*, of which we shall hear more presently, reached Wady Halfa with a second detachment of the Sussex regiment. Others had already arrived and more were coming next day, and the orders were that the battalion should push on to Dongola without delay with three months' rations for a thousand men. At that time Commander Hammill was at Wady Halfa with 80 men of the naval brigade to superintend the steamers passing the cataract; the Mudir of Dongola had sent twelve 20-ton boats to Tanjour to assist in the

transport service above the cataract, and other boats were on the way. On the 29th seven steamers had got well over the first cataracts, and the Nile was rising; there were 2000 labourers sent from Dongola at Wady Halfa for assisting in the portage and haulage work at the cataracts. These with 400 camels, collected by the mudir, required considerable supplies of food and forage, both of which were slow in arriving till a consignment of biscuit and forage was forwarded by special train from Cairo. There was fortunately a good crop of dates and a fair supply of barley in the district. The mudir had gone to Dongola, whither the first contingent of troops with stores and provisions were pushed, and on the 27th the river had reached a point where steamers might be hauled over the second cataract.

At Assiout were the means of transport at that time provided, namely, steamboats, dayabeeahs, and barges, the two latter requiring to be towed. Of the barges there were a large number on the Nile, previously used for conveying coal to the sugar plantations and pumping stations, for carrying labourers, and for transporting machinery, produce, and troops. They were about 120 feet long, with a beam of eight feet, and the same depth; they were decked and floored below, leaving seven feet between. Being flat-bottomed they drew little water, and were well adapted for the transport of men or material on the navigable portions of the river. The passage from Assiout to Assouan would, it was calculated, take a steamer towing six such barges from eight to twelve days; a steamboat without incumbrance occupying from four to six days.

From the commencement of the expedition it became evident that the general in command had great objections to the presence of special correspondents even of the leading newspapers and journals with the forces on the Nile. There had been some complaints on the part of correspondents during the former campaign for the suppression of Arabi's rebellion, and it was generally understood that General Wolseley expected all communications sent by telegraph from newspaper correspondents to be first submitted to headquarters, where they might be considerably revised, or rather abridged. The reasons alleged for this

were the rapidity with which news travelled from England back to Egypt, or the probabilities of messages being communicated to Arabi or other hostile chiefs, who might thus have been enabled to frustrate the operations of the expedition either by counter-arrangements or by intrigue.

Some complaints and even a few innuendos were made at that time, but many of the leading chroniclers of the events of the Egyptian campaign afterwards conceded that the general might have had sufficient reasons for the restrictions which he adopted, especially as it was found that accounts of the various operations which did not reveal the probable future movement of the troops were allowed to be despatched unaltered. Into the questions discussed in relation to the presence of special correspondence we need not enter, as it is far from the scope of these pages; but it may be mentioned that a distinct notice was given at Cairo that no newspaper correspondents or representatives of the press would be permitted to join the force in the journey up the Nile. The notification went farther than this, and in a direction which tended to show that the prohibition was chiefly occasioned by the determination to confine the arrangements within military limits, and to include no one who would not be entitled to share in the rations and provisions calculated to be sufficient for the use of the expedition on the Nile journey. It was announced that no private gentleman would be permitted to accompany the force, and that no employment would be found for gentlemen seeking to join it and willing to render service. This, of course, seemed to preclude anyone but those officially appointed to the expedition from taking any part in it even as spectators, and though there does not seem to have subsequently been any serious opposition to the presence of special correspondents and artists at the camp at Korti or with Sir Herbert Stewart's column, it was supposed the notice given at Cairo was in a great measure prohibitory. The "war correspondent," however, has attained to a position which cannot be ignored, and the representatives of leading newspapers are frequently hardy and adventurous explorers or campaigners who have held rank or are quite capable of holding rank in the army,

and are accustomed, not only to the privations and the dangers of a military expedition, but to the expedients and resources, a knowledge of which mitigates the sufferings and inconveniences caused by being separated from many of the comforts and some of the necessaries of ordinary life.

Consequently the special war correspondents were not the kind of men to turn back. On the contrary, either by one of the first steamers that passed the cataracts before the expedition and were at Dongola in advance of the main body of the troops,—or by a private "whale-boat" of their own which had been secured beforehand, and being well provisioned and navigated by a competent *reis*, went gaily, flying the "press" flag, along the course traversed by the great flotilla,—or by successive stages of river and land transport,—the special correspondents were to the front, and though the accounts of the Nile journey were not voluminous, they were sufficiently indicative of the fact that more than one "chiel" was "takin' notes," either by pen or pencil, for descriptive articles or illustrations which afterwards appeared in newspapers and magazines.

That the newspaper correspondent had more serious difficulties than ever to contend against was asserted without contradiction, and one communication in a leading daily newspaper revealed that his telegrams were doubly countersigned, first at the front and again at headquarters, where they were delayed *en route* for inspection. A rigid order had been issued that on no account was he to be allowed on board government boats. He must make his way along the banks of the Nile by camel, and as the distances between the various points of interest were immense, and as only one representative of each journal was permitted to pass Wady Halfa, he was much puzzled from day to day, or, rather, from week to week, where to place himself. "I had hoped," wrote the correspondent who sent this letter, "myself to have gone on with the *Nassif-el-Kheir* to Merawi, and although her commandant kindly offered me a passage, Colonel Sir Herbert Stewart at Dongola was obliged to enforce the order which forbids English journalists, whether there is room for them or not, to put foot on

any of the vessels belonging to their country now navigating the Nile. The Mudir of Dongola, an Egyptian clerk, or an officer's native servant might be allowed a passage, but the representative of an English newspaper on no account whatever. As matters stand, should an unfortunate correspondent be chased to the bank by a crowd of howling Arabs, the officer in command of any government craft, if he did his duty, would be obliged to refuse him refuge, saying civilly, no doubt, but firmly, 'No correspondents allowed on government boats.' We are thus, in a manner, branded officially as outcasts, although we come neither asking nor receiving medals or honours, but seeking simply, while willing to share the dangers and hardships of the troops, to do our duty."

Well, of course, "special newspaper correspondence" was not one of the duties recognized by the military authorities as, perhaps, it should have been. At all events, it was at that time discountenanced by the commander-in-chief, and to him, as compared with the more hospitable and friendly disposition of other officers of rank, the prohibitions were attributed. In the case of the correspondent whose complaint has been quoted, however, the public were perhaps the gainers, for not being allowed to go by the steamer he determined to return to Wady Halfa from Dongola, to accompany the first batch of Nile boats. He made the journey to Wady Halfa by camel by the reverse route which would soon be taken by the camel corps, travelling from Wady Halfa or Sarras to Dongola. The consequence was that he wrote in his "special letter" a very entertaining account of his journey by the camel route of 245 miles, "which, on good trotting camels, if no baggage is carried, might be traversed in five or six days. For some time previously, in Dongola," he wrote, "we had all been busy supplying ourselves with camels. From eight pounds each, the market price of a good animal had risen to fifteen pounds and twenty-five pounds. As many Englishmen during the present expedition are beginning to learn, the camel is not a pleasant beast to ride. The novice for the first time on a camel's back experiences a general feeling of insecurity. In the event of a mishap, the distance to be traversed before the ground is reached is felt to be

great; and then, for some time at least, the conviction is firmly entertained that should the camel trot round to the left while the rider intended him to go to the right, it would not be possible for the latter to adapt his movements to those of the former in time to prevent a catastrophe. After a while this feeling wears away, more or less; but I have found no Englishman as yet who, when asked if he liked camel riding, replied in the affirmative. A question of frequent discussion is the kind of saddle to be adopted. The camel corps are accommodated with saddles, on which the men sit astride as on horseback, and on these they soon feel as much at home as is possible on a camel's back. But, undoubtedly, the best form of saddle, both for man and camel for a long journey, is the Soudan native pattern, on which the rider seats himself like a lady equestrian, with rugs and blankets laid on the top, and a prop behind to lean against. A long journey on these may be accomplished with comparatively little fatigue—provided always that the camel is an easy one to ride. Camels vary very much in that respect. The jolt of a rough camel is perhaps the most unpleasant motion that a human being can be subjected to, while a smooth-going one will carry his rider at a gentle jog for hours, as easily for the rider almost as if he were seated in an arm-chair. As may be understood, the vast majority of camels supplied to the troops belong to the former category and very rarely to the latter. The other day I heard a gentleman, who had ridden his animal for the first time, inquire how many feet at each jog an ordinary camel threw his rider into the air. He wished to gauge whether his own was an extraordinary one or not. A blue-jacket at Wady Halfa admired a camel he rode exceedingly, because, being pitched up out of his saddle incessantly, and caught dexterously as he descended, 'the camel had only missed him twice during the afternoon.'"

After the usual delays and obstacles to making a start which the traveller in the East has always to overcome on beginning a journey, he, with two guides and a servant, left Dongola behind in the early morning, having on the previous evening encamped outside the walls. His camels were induced to leave the town

with difficulty. They seemed to understand thoroughly that it was no mere afternoon ride upon which they were bound, and made their protests accordingly. This they did by sitting down every few yards and remaining on the ground until flogged up again. "A camel is alway in a state of extreme mental depression. He whines and groans incessantly, and never, apparently, like other animals, makes friends with his master. He trots along all day with an air of hopeless misery which nothing seems to alleviate. Only the courbash has any effect upon him. The courbash is as necessary an accessory to comfortable camel-riding as, according to Ismail Pasha, it was to successful government in Egypt. The hide of the Nile hippopotamus tanned and oiled and cut into long strips forms a whip that, as elastic as gutta percha, is yet much harder than that material; and it twines round the body of its victim with electric effect. Probably there is no more excruciating pain than the cut of a courbash, and it switches through the air with a ping like a rifle-bullet—a sound by itself generally sufficient to induce the most obstinate camel or fellah promptly to obey orders." By the margin of the desert they rode where it encroaches on the strip of cultivated land that follows the Nile from its source almost to the sea. Overhead the sun glared fiercely, and on every side a misty mirage distorted the horizon. From the first moment of starting until the end of the day's march the four camels stretched out in front their long necks, peering anxiously for the halting-place, and groaning with disappointment as each clump of palm-trees was passed, and they still pushed on. For the night they stopped at a small hamlet of half a dozen huts, the inhabitants of which brought, by way of hospitality, a chicken in the last stages of starvation, some dates, an egg or two, and a gourd of milk. They had forgotten to bring cooking utensils, so they had to make a meal of cold "bully" beef and the eggs, with some tea brewed in the empty meat tin, and so went to sleep side by side with their camels, with a new moon overhead, by the dim light of which the villagers sat round curiously watching them in their bivouac. Not far off was the usual village water irrigating wheel, which, during high Nile period, relays of bullocks turn night and day. A sound not

conducive to continued slumber was the creaking of those cumbersome wooden contrivances for lifting Nile water on to the land.

In the evening he had been much astonished by being addressed by one of the natives in the village in the words, "Good evenin', sar," and found that the man had been an officer's servant on board a paddle-steamer for nearly six years, and had visited Bombay, Singapore, and China, but had come back to his native village with his savings. According to him the wealthier classes of the population—and he himself, in his native village, was considered a capitalist—viewed the threatened approach of the Mahdi with dread. The radical theories as to distribution of property and so on, preached by the Mahdi, were no more fancied by men of substance in Nubia than they are elsewhere.

Early in the morning throughout the journey, away on the other side of the Nile, a red gleam in the sky betokened the approach of dawn. Kneeling on mats on the ground, and with heads turned towards Mecca, the two guides were to be heard repeating their morning prayers, alternately crying out with loud voices and alternately muttering their petitions for a successful day's journey. "The most praying country in the world is this Soudan. Quite independent of the Mahdi's movement, the people everywhere are filled with religious fervour, which, it is easy to understand, with little effort may be turned into fanaticism. In his rigorous observance of the laws of the Koran lies in great part the secret of the mudir's power; and Osman Digma at Suakim, by dressing like a fakir, in a single dirty cotton cloth, and covering himself with dust, and praying continuously, induced the Hadendowas to follow him first to victory and then to their death. In Suakim itself the moolah in the little mosque began to call the people there to prayers at four o'clock every morning. At first the sonorous sound of his deep voice, rising and falling in musical cadence, was pronounced interesting in a high degree; later on we described it as bellowing and a nuisance of the first order."

The second day the camel of one of the guides broke down, and they were obliged, albeit with heavy hearts, to sacrifice sundry little comforts which had been provided for the journey. The

trotting camel must carry nothing but its rider and a day's food. To the fact that three tins of bully beef and a spare suit of underclothing had been intrusted to him in addition, the guide attributed the collapse of his animal. But, once having started, nothing should ever stop you on a journey in eastern climes. Consent to even a day's delay, and you may be unable to advance again for a week. So, sternly refusing to halt while he endeavoured to procure another camel, the traveller proceeded with one guide, leaving behind the other, and trusting to replace the stores he carried with eggs and chickens from the wayside villages. Every morning they breakfasted as they jogged on their camels' backs over the sand, half a dozen eggs each and some dates forming their repast; but he explains that a Nubian egg is a very different article from that deposited by an English hen. "An average wood pigeon, if fed well for a week and put on her mettle, would probably surpass in the size of her produce the best egg-laying bird in the Soudan."

The journey was from Dongola to Haffir, six hours, about thirty miles, with a good road and frequent villages; Haffir to Fakr Bender thirty miles; thence across the Mahass desert to Koke, where the river is crossed in native nuggars which the camels seem to understand. Koke to Dal, where there was a large commissariat station and rations were issued. Thence to Sarras, with twenty-eight miles' journey across the desert and over rocky ground.

During this journey the correspondent was much struck with the ignorance of the people as to the objects which the English had in view in entering their country. At Dongola itself the inhabitants considered that the troops had been sent to assist the mudir in reconquering the Soudan; but elsewhere the people thought they had come to annex their country, as they believed they had already done Lower Egypt. In Lower Egypt itself the wildest stories were circulated and believed in the villages; and although Englishmen individually, of all the foreigners who mix among the people, were most popular with them, our interference with their government was strongly disapproved of. They be-

lieved that the main object we had in view was the recovery of vast sums lent to Ismail Pasha, and every tax and every act of oppression were put down to us, who were supposed to have taken since Tel-el-Kebir fabulous sums away from the country. Of our good intentions, of our efforts to abolish the courbash, and of our offer to advance money for their relief, they knew nothing; the fact being that we took no trouble to tell the people what we were doing on their behalf. The misrepresentations were chiefly of French origin, but we did little to counteract them, although a few Arabic proclamations, judiciously worded and posted in all the bazaars from time to time, would have had a most excellent effect.

These were the experiences of a writer who evidently spoke from trained observation, but the description of the perverse opinions of the people he describes is strangely seconded, or as some may think contrasted, by the declaration of another correspondent, that the people along the Nile banks, the patient tillers of the patches of maize or beans, and the herders of goats, had little notion of what was going forward. At some of the villages they had not so much as heard of the Mahdi, still less that there was an expedition for the relief of Gordon. At one village they said that there were more Nile travellers than usual coming up, and that the season was beginning earlier; but they had not seen any soldiers, and they were quite incredulous when told that the steamers were carrying or towing English troops. The state of ignorance of what was passing daily under their eyes was almost incredible, but it was evidently not assumed, and in the whole village there was to be found only one man who had heard of Gordon, and he declared he had gone away to his own country long ago. The villagers were willing to sell what few supplies they had, but their flocks were few and small, their herds confined to the couple of oxen employed at the water-wheels, and the small seed of the dhurra was not palatable to Englishmen. Thus lambs, eggs, and the milk of sheep were practically the only provisions they had to sell, and the value of the lambs as food for soldiers may be guessed from the fact that one lamb, picked from a number on account of its good looks,

weighed, when skinned and paunched, only 9 lbs., and it cost at the rate of 8*d.* a pound. A sheep would have cost four dollars, and the value of the meat would have been even less in proportion to the money, for they seemed to run almost entirely to wool, and the best of them were too fat in the tail. Turkeys were about the only things worth buying, and they could only be got at the largest places, from all of which it was gathered that the promise of regular rations of fresh meat on certain days in the week when the men took to the boats, was one that it would be almost impossible to keep. This, however, mattered the less, as the American tinned meats had hitherto proved of invariably excellent quality, and to the corned beef in particular the men had taken quite a fancy, though it was doubtful whether it would not pall upon their tastes even when with potatoes and onions it was made into savoury sea-pie.

The labour of hauling the big steamers at the cataract at Wady Halfa may be imagined when it is remembered that when the *Nassif-Kheir* had grounded amidships through the fall in the river, nearly 3000 men on the east bank and the adjacent islands were employed at the hawsers. The vessel was got afloat and passed the first rapid, but at the second rapid the bow hawser parted, and the blue-jackets who brought a fresh cable down the cataract in a boat, narrowly escaped being wrecked because of the strength of the current and the difficulty of navigation. The new hawser and the men were taken on board, but the boat was subsequently wrecked lower down the cataract. At the second attempt to get the steamer along the bow cable parted again, and she was finally eased into a safe berth about 500 yards down the stream, but above the original starting-place. She had sustained so much injury by coming against the rocks and otherwise that she had to be repaired. This steamer had been taken over by the admiralty some months before, and, armed with a Gardner gun and manned with about fifteen blue-jackets and a couple of officers, had the duty of patrolling the Nile between Philæ and Wady Halfa as one of the vessels already referred to. In the middle of September, at the time of the passage of this steamer, which was berthed at

SCENE ON THE NILE AT WADY HALFA.

Base of Operations of the Nile Expeditionary Force, 1884–85.

Sarras, the operations at Wady Halfa were being carried out with the utmost energy, and every native who chose to work could find constant employment. When the patrolling of the Nile by armed vessels was first ordered there had been little property at Wady Halfa to need protection, except the enormous accumulation of material for constructing the line which had been abandoned; material which had cost Egypt dear, since, by the terms of the agreement with the contractors, royalties and compensations representing fines for breach of contract, had been claimed. For seven years a large quantity of the valuable but unused materials and stores, worth perhaps nearly a million of money, had been accumulating unrecoverable interest in the sheds and workshops at the Wady Halfa station. The battalion under the command of Colonel Trotter had recently been at Wady Halfa and were ready to protect them, but until the rebellion they had been left comparatively uncared for, though the inhabitants of the district were not likely to loot the buildings, except for the lighter portion of the materials, since railway bars and sleepers, steam-cranes, engines and boilers were not very portable, and even the picks and shovels were not adapted for everyday use in Egyptian husbandry. However, there had been a certain amount of watchfulness on the part of the Mudir of Dongola's men, and when Colonel Trotter came into occupation, the accumulations of the "plant" were very large, and some additions had probably been made to them when it was determined to repair the line and the trucks, and to complete the slight extension where works had been commenced.

The railway buildings stretch along the inner bank some 50 yards inland for about half a mile. The chief buildings are, of course, the station-house and engine-shop, which are of stone and of considerable size; the others, placed at intervals along the river bank, are little more than huts or sheds with the usual mud walls; the last group of them forming a sort of small square at the entrance of the village, between which and the station were to be seen the heaps of materials left at the time the work was abandoned. An eye-witness thus catalogued them:—"Steam

engines of various sorts, with and without wheels, with and without boilers, and in every stage of decay; steam-pumps, steam-cranes, pyramids of rails and sleepers, mountains of iron bolts and rivets, a huge cairn built entirely of wheelbarrows, a mound of camel saddles, and another mound of camel nets; great coils of cable, numerous red iron tanks, capable of holding each a couple of tons of water; a few miles of telegraph wire, with a number of poles, a heap of iron chairs—not chairs to sit on, but for the use of the sleepers—barrels of blasting fuse and of paint, stacks of dry water-skins, a lane of oil jars, both full and empty, a bristling breastwork of picks and shovels, and innumerable other articles, complete and incomplete, in good and bad repair, the names of which I know not, are strewn about the ground in such strange confusion as to recall to the mind of the beholder the story of the sleeping beauty, and its quaint illustrations of the effect of the spell on all within its influence."

The actual line, which runs in the direction of Dongola for 34 miles, starts from about a mile above the station, skirts the village, and, touching the river at the commencement of the cataracts, takes a loop across the rocky desert through one or two cuttings which must have cost a large amount of labour, and strikes the river at Sarras. Beyond that point no rails had been laid, but the permanent way had been prepared for a further distance of 22 miles to within seven miles of the head of the Ambukol cataracts—some very difficult rapids. A cutting of about 300 yards in length, which would here have carried the line to the edge of the river, had been carried on for some distance. It had been decided that though there was not sufficient time to complete this work, the railway should be carried to the entrance of the cutting, and this, with the repairs, reinstatement of engines, &c., and the reconstruction of the trucks, which were to answer the purpose of carriages as well as for the transport of baggage, munition, &c., would, it was calculated, occupy some weeks.

But not only was the sleepy and forgotten village startled into activity by the invasion of an army of engineers and labourers who seemed capable of resuscitating the mechanical vitality of

forge and engine. The chief buildings were metamorphosed and were devoted to a new purpose. The workshops were alive again with the sounds of saw, file, and hammer, the clink and clang of iron upon iron, the roar of the bellows, the harsh squeal of drill and augur perforating sheets of metal, were to be heard from morning to night; while the station-house, a two-storied building surrounded by a broad verandah and so roofed as to keep the upper story (probably intended for offices) pleasantly cool, was converted into a "base" hospital—that is, a hospital at the base of the position from which the expedition was to start, and to which seriously invalided or wounded men could be sent back. There was room there for sixty patients. The other railway buildings had also been adapted to different purposes, one of them being Sir Evelyn Wood's headquarters, another was the commissariat; and the large engine-shop—already referred to as having been converted into a fort by Colonel Trotter—was used as a magazine.

Of course the troops, which at the earlier date arrived from Assouan, only remained at Wady Halfa till they could be sent on, and they chiefly occupied the houses at the head of the village, the officers taking up their quarters in the house of the local governor. It may be imagined that the bank of the Nile at Wady Halfa presented a lively bustling scene, and that the heaps of heterogeneous merchandise mingled with the stores and rations landed from the barges, dahabeeahs, and nuggars made a very entertaining spectacle to those who had little responsibility, if any such could be found. Certainly there were none among the officers, who, like the men, were living chiefly on "bully" beef and preserved potatoes. They must have regarded with a certain curious anxiety the discharged cargoes of beer, of ostrich feathers, bales of gum and senna, elephants' tusks, jars of castor-oil, mixed up in almost inextricable confusion with pickaxes, railway sleepers, boilers, heaps of camel saddles, and all kinds of gear to be used in the passage of the coming boats. There was some method even amidst the apparent confusion, however, and every day the fifty-four trucks of the railway made the journey to Sarras heavily

laden with stores or with troops, who were to await at that station the means of transport. Long strings of camels too were sent forth to supplement the insufficient work of the railway. Wady Halfa had become a place of commercial importance, and the Greek merchants had opened stores there for the sale of tinned provisions and other possibly less wholesome delicacies, as well as for articles of clothing of strange make and purpose; but they were not allowed to sell drink. The expedition was intended to be organized on strictly temperance principles, and this was carried out as far as possible. It was only when there were reasons for believing that the health of the men would seriously suffer by total abstinence from stimulants, considering the vicissitudes of the climate, the privations that they had to undergo, and the almost unremitting labour that they had to perform, that rations of rum were served out on certain days to the troops so engaged.

The most important event which had happened with regard to the expedition was the passage of the great cataract by the steamer already referred to. Commander Hammill had then surveyed all the cataracts of the Nile as far as Hannek—within a day's march of Dongola—and the commander-in-chief and indeed all the officers were striving to push forward the troops to that place, and it was pretty certain that if the *Nassif-Kheir* steamer could get on, the rest of the Nile fleet could follow. Of course her paddles could not work in the great fall where she had to be hauled, and a strong wire-hawser was slung and fastened below water-line in the bows, and arranged for raising the head against the rush of water when any great strain was placed on the head hawsers, and for providing for the use of strong guide-ropes both forward and aft. There were all kinds of gear and tackle on board; the Gardner gun had been removed from its platform and lay on deck abaft the engine-room; two or three men who could not swim were put ashore, and life-buoys, in the shape of inflated skins, were stowed on deck ready for use. As we have already seen, there was an army of soldiers, sailors, and labourers waiting for the steamer and ready to help below the "first gate," the passage, about a hundred yards wide, between the east bank and the

island, where the stream flows at the rate of some twelve knots an hour. The correspondent of the *Times* wrote:—

"The scene on the east bank as the steamer drew up to it was quaint and striking. Squatting here and there on the rocks were the native labourers in two great groups separated by the little band of English sailors, who looked square and solid by the side of the slightly built Nubians. The Esneh men, clad mostly in the blue galabieh of the fellaheen, brightened the uniform yellow and black of the background. The Dongolese could not be said to contribute much in the way of colour. Each man blacker than his neighbour, clothed, when clothed at all, in a few yards of dirty cotton cloth, with their bare bullet heads, some shaved, some with the wool cropped close, some with thick bushy hair hanging about their shoulders, their appearance was certainly not calculated to prepossess the beholder; but what they lacked in comeliness they made up in cheerfulness and lightness of heart, and while the Esneh men were dull, stolid, and sad, looking on the *corvée* but as one more act of tyranny and oppression, the Dongolese, accustomed to oppression all their lives, and not understanding any other existence, appeared to think themselves on a pleasure trip, where there was a little more to be got to eat, a little more money to be earned than at home, and nearly as little work to be done, and munched their doura and water, chattered to and chaffed one another, and held shrill and animated conversations with friends a couple of hundred yards distant, with the jovial *insouciance* of children out of school. Like children did they steadfastly refuse to work until driven to it by the courbash, armed with which formidable instrument and a beltful of other weapons, some fifty Bashi-Bazouks stalked gravely hither and thither amid the various groups. When the Wakeel of Dongola, come from Halfa in the *Nassif-Kheir*, emerged from the steamer gorgeous in bright green coat and brighter scarlet trousers, a momentary silence fell upon the noisy crowd, and each man rose to his feet, while Colonel Grant, R.A., who had charge of all the labourers, advanced to meet him. After a few words of conversation, the wakeel gave an order to a subordinate, who passed it to a chief of Bashi-Bazouks.

In a moment the Bashi-Bazouks were urging a portion of the crowd—the swimmers—down to the water's edge, where each man, after a moment's pause to deftly bind his garment round his head and to inflate the water skin which is the travelling carriage of every Nubian dweller on the Nile, committed himself to the stream and paddled over to the island. In a few moments the surface of the river was dotted with innumerable little bobbing figures, some being borne down stream at tremendous pace by a race more than usually swift, some stationary in a stretch of back-water, some spinning top-like round and round in an eddy from which it was not easy to escape, and all laughing and shouting or *coeying* to each other with a peculiar and not unmusical double note, by which these river dwellers convey their voices to a great distance above the rush of the water and the roar of the stream."

The temporary but awkward accident which prevented the steamer from achieving the passage triumphantly instead of clumsily, was said to have been caused by the necessity for using grass ropes instead of hempen cables. The swiftness of the water, the distances over which the hawsers had to be carried to the different rocks and islands where the hauling parties could gain foothold made it important, if not absolutely essential, to use a rope that would float and not be a dead weight against the tremendous current. But the grass ropes were weak, the strain was great, and we have already referred to the consequences. Two five-and-a-half-inch hawsers parted just as the steamer had reached the top of the second "gate," whence she swung in against the shore. There were four more of these gates to pass, and the Great Gate, which was the most difficult, and the Nile began to fall; but Sir Evelyn Wood and Commander Hammill, after tackling Sheikh Coco, the navigator, who had come from Dongola to pilot the steamer over the rapids, determined with the permission of the admiralty, to try a channel which they had previously explored, and the passage was made after eight hours' hard work, with more parting of hawsers, and fresh cables taken out by a boat from the island. After being tracked through many difficult channels, and with the loss of three men, drowned by the carelessness and idleness of the

natives on shore in the course of tracking a ship's boat, the steamer passed the Bab-el-Kebir, or Great Gate, a narrow passage some 50 yards long and at its widest part 34 feet across. On either side are high rocks between which the water boils and surges down an incline of 1 foot in 10 feet, ending with an actual fall of about 5 feet. In this passage the steamer's paddles would, of course, be useless, so they were removed—and it was necessary to trust entirely to the wire cable round the steamer, to the 8-inch hempen hawsers which were to track her, and to the good-will and energy of the 3000 natives who were to do the actual work of hauling. This work was accomplished, however, much to the joy of these labourers, who, as the steamer was brought to the top of the channel and into calm water, shouted, danced, clapped their hands, flung themselves on the ground, and even jumped into the water and paddled round the vessel to relieve their excitement or to manifest their delight.

Of course the passage from Assiout to Assouan and, even after the first cataract, to Wady Halfa was an entirely different affair, and to General Earle and his staff, who had the khedive's superb yacht placed at their disposal, and to many others who went by the ordinary Nile boat, the journey was pleasant enough. There was an evident desire to get promptly to the front, and Sir Herbert Stewart had been sent to Dongola to take the command there. The real difficulties began at Wady Halfa. The seven miles of railway round the first cataract at Assouan was in pretty good order, and it was correspondingly easy to forward men, horses, and stores from Alexandria to Wady Halfa; but the thirty-three miles of rail from Wady Halfa to Sarras was a rickety affair. Trains broke down and blocked the traffic, the lines caved in, or some other cause of delay occurred repeatedly. But by the 25th of September some of the Royal Sussex men and the mounted infantry, with three months' provisions, were already at Dongola, and the remainder were well on their way in the native boats sent to Sarras by the mudir, in which they had been embarked by Major Sandwith, acting under the orders of Sir Evelyn Wood. The first contingents from Cairo were able to get on by the same

means. It was felt, however, that the general advance of the expedition could not take place till the arrival of the whale-boats.

On the 20th of September the headquarters of the mounted infantry and some 280 officers and men embarked on board nine nuggars which lay ready for them at Sarras, and though they knew that they had before them many days of hard work in tremendous heat or under a scorching sun, they were by no means disheartened, but cheerfully looked forward to the journey in open boats as a real change from the noisy, close, and dusty quarters at Wady Halfa. On each nuggar there were 40 men with all their stores, rations, and ammunition for 90 days, and about ten camel saddles. One boat had a tent awning and was kept in case it should be wanted as a floating hospital; only Major Gough, the adjutant of the corps, and the surgeon being on board. In illustrating the temper and the cheerful alacrity of the British soldier, and his readiness to make the best of whatever situation he may be placed in so long as he is actively engaged, it is among the distinct records of the expedition that in the 300 miles' journey from Sarras to Dongola, the frequent stoppages and the necessity of towing the boats for distances varying from 400 yards to three miles was regarded by both officers and men as a great relief from the tedium of sitting in the boats exposed to the scorching glare of the sun. No one could move on board a boat, and if a man dared to stand up the *reis* or native captain declared with frantic gestures that the vessel would be wrecked, and that he could not steer if anyone prevented him from seeing forward. The towing and hauling were therefore regarded as pleasant changes. A correspondent with the expedition wrote:—

"On these occasions the different boat parties displayed great spirit of rivalry, and some most exciting struggles for best place animated each band of trackers. The officers were quite as interested in the result as were their men, and it was amusing at more than one difficult point in the latter part of the voyage to see Colonel Sir Herbert Stewart, the new commandant of Dongola, and members of his staff, with coats off and shoes full of black mud, hauling, in the midst of the soldiers and the native crews,

on to a grass hawser, which almost invariably snapped suddenly and overthrew the whole party. The struggle over, the first boat round the difficult point would sail triumphantly away, the soldiers on board cheering and railing at the less fortunate occupants of the other boats still plodding wearily on the bank. The labour ended, and all the boats, save some one laggard, well under weigh again, the soldiers would sit, as Tommy Atkins will always sit when he gets a chance, with their pipes upside down in their mouths and their legs hanging over the sides of the boats and almost touching the water, and as one nuggar now and again overhauled another a volley of chaff would be exchanged between the occupants of the two crafts. Shortly before dusk the halt would be signalled from the major's boat, and all the crafts would, if possible, join and moor up to the bank. Then, as soon as guards were placed, all the men were allowed on shore, with, however, strict orders to keep out of the village if there happened to be one near. Orders were also given to spare the date-palms, but strict compliance with such a mandate was hardly to be expected. . . .

Sometimes when the wind failed altogether, or was so adverse as to render towing absolutely impracticable, the halt was necessarily called quite early in the afternoon. Then was Thomas Atkins in his element. He bathed in some shallow part of the stream, took his tea comfortably and at his ease reclining on the bank, and then, attired in his favourite off-duty undress, lounged about the bank enjoying the inevitable pipe and the jokes and conversation of his friends. Comfort in costume to the British soldier is represented as follows. His jacket and shirt are replaced by his great-coat, the cuffs of which are turned back. His trousers, unbraced, are rolled up to his knees. His boots are unlaced, his pipe, of course, upside down, and his helmet is put on wrong side before. Has he been able to obtain some particularly uncouth head-dress—such as an old and mangy rabbit or rat skin cap, a battered tarboosch, or broken-down and brimless felt hat—he dons it with pride and satisfaction, provided always it be thoroughly disreputable—for otherwise where would be the merit; but failing this, he is content with the helmet worn as I have described. In this attire,

and with a convenient post or tree to lean against, or with a rail or a bank to sit on, he enjoys the assertion of his dress, of his momentary freedom from restraint, and feels that he has, for the time being, retired into private life, where care cannot reach him till the next bugle-call."

At night there was usually a great fall in the thermometer, and the one blanket supplied to the men was not too much—especially as no stimulant was supplied, and there was no regimental canteen as there is at home, while the poor peasants on the banks had nothing to sell but a cup or two of goat's milk, which they could ill spare.

The dangers of the voyage were illustrated by an accident to a boat containing a number of the Sussex regiment in command of Lieutenant Crawford. It was in full sail when it ran on a sunken rock and split open. The boat was alone, and the stream wide at this point; the officer in command fired near a hundred rounds to attract attention, but some time elapsed before another nuggar could be brought to his assistance, and in this interval of time two men were drowned. Of the 40 men on board very few could swim—and the Nile current is dangerous even to the most powerful swimmers. Lieutenant Crawford insisted on the men sticking to the boat, as long as she held together, and having managed to attract the attention of Captain Powell, who was in another nuggar half a mile off, he was able to save all except the two mentioned. The wrecked boat went to pieces as soon as the men could be got on board Captain Powell's nuggar; and rifles, ammunition, stores, and kits were all lost.

On arriving at Dal, Major Gough was met by Sir H. Stewart and his staff. General Stewart had started from Sarras on horseback with little or no baggage, and had ridden for a day and a half, covering a distance of 40 miles. The road from Sarras was so rough that from the time of their start until their arrival at Dal, the commander and his party had been unable to get anything beyond a walk out of their beasts. General Sir H. Stewart, however, being determined to push on, resisted for the time being Major Gough's invitations to him to leave his horses and join the

boats as a less fatiguing and equally rapid mode of travelling. Two days later, however, the riding party succumbed and confessed themselves beaten. The boats met them again at Apsarat, 60 miles from Dal, and the ponies being by this time completely done up, and requiring at least two days' rest before proceeding, General Sir Herbert Stewart decided to throw in his lot with Major Gough, and the ponies were left behind in charge of their grooms. From Apsarat on to Dongola the country is fertile and cultivated, and the villagers brought down small articles for sale. As the boats neared Dongola these supplies increased, until, instead of the goats' milk and bad dates which for 150 miles had only been obtainable, the men were able to purchase sheep, fowls, eggs, and vegetables, all of which were very welcome to them as a change from the monotony of tinned rations.

It was soon to become known that there was an additional reason for hastening towards Dongola and the further rendezvous at Korti, whence the two forces would be directed, one to continue by the river, the other to cross the peninsula to Metammeh. General Wolseley had heard for certain that Gordon was now alone in Khartûm:—that the mission of his companions Stewart and Power had failed, or rather had been cut short almost at the outset:—that Stewart, Power, the French consul Herbin, and all, or nearly all, who were with them had been foully massacred. In the latter part of October the investigations which General Lord Wolseley had ordered confirmed the worst anticipations, and he sent the following telegrams to Sir Evelyn Baring:—

"Two messengers sent to inquire as to the fate of Colonel Stewart's party have returned. They report that the steamer was towing two boats containing M. Naoom with his brother and family. As the enemy was found to be overtaking them the convoy boats were cut adrift, and all on board of them were made prisoners. Shortly afterwards the steamer struck on a rock near Catadich. There were at this time forty-five persons on board, four of whom were women. Colonel Stewart and two consuls, one of whom was named Nicola, were among those on board. The whole party, except two natives, were killed by Sheikh

Suleiman. This information was obtained from one of the two survivors by the messenger. The man said that Colonel Stewart, whom he described as a tall man with a light beard, was certainly on board the steamer."

It was not, however, till four months later that the full truth was known. Then Hussein, the stoker of Stewart's steamer, escaped from the enemy, and came into the British camp. This is the story he told:—The party had left Khartûm in September. There were with them two other steamers. On board the *Abdai* were Colonel Stewart, two pashas, two European consuls, Hassan Bey, twelve Greeks, and some Egyptian soldiers, besides the crew. When they reached Berber they shelled the forts there. After this the other steamers went back.

They came on down the Nile. Nothing happened until they had passed Abu Hamed, but on September 18th the steamer struck on a rock. They were then passing through Wad Gamr's country. As they had passed down they had seen the people running away into the hills on both sides of the river. When it was found that the steamer could not be got off the rock the small-boat, filled with useful things, was sent to a little island near. Four trips were made. Then Colonel Ṣtewart himself spiked the guns and threw them overboard, and also two boxes of ammunition. The people now came down to the right bank in great numbers, shouting, "Give us peace and grain." Stewart's party answered, "Peace." Suleiman Wad Gamr himself was in a small house near the bank, and he came out and called to Colonel Stewart to land without fear, but said that the soldiers must be unarmed or the people would be afraid of them. Colonel Stewart, after talking it over with the others, then crossed in the boats with the two English consuls and Hassan Bey and entered the house of a blind man, Fakir Etman, to arrange with Suleiman for the purchase of camels to take the party down to Dongola. None of the four had any arms, with the exception of Colonel Stewart, who carried a small revolver in his pocket. While they were in the house the rest began to land in the boat. After a little time these saw Suleiman come out of the house with a copper water-pot in

his hand. He made signs to the people, who were all gathered near the house. They immediately divided into two parties, one entering the house, the other rushing down towards those gathered on the bank shouting and waving their spears. Hussein was with the party who had landed when they charged down, and on seeing the move he and the rest threw themselves into the river. The natives fired, killing some of the swimmers; many others were drowned, and the rest speared as they came near the bank. Hussein swam to the island and hid there till dark, when he was made prisoner with some others and sent to Berti. He heard that Colonel Stewart and the two Englishmen were killed at once. Hassan Bey held the blind man before him so that they could not spear him. They spared his life, and he afterwards escaped to Berber. Two artillerymen, two sailors, and three natives are still alive at Berber, where they were sent by Suleiman. All the money found on board and in the victims' pockets was divided among the men who did the murder. Everything else of value was placed in two boxes and sent under a guard to Berber. The bodies of Stewart, Power, and the others were thrown in the river.

It will, perhaps, be convenient, in view of the consecutive character of the narrative, if we here follow the further details afterwards made known from information obtained by Major Kitchener:—

"The steamer struck a rock at the entrance of the Monassir cataracts, just below the island of Kanaiett, on the small island of Um-Dewermat. Stewart, Power, and the French consul were on board. Stewart ordered the spare ammunition to be thrown into the river, and, after spiking the small gun, threw it also into the river.

The inhabitants were at first much alarmed, and ran away, but Stewart sent the reis Mohammed on shore to reassure them, and promised them peace. The natives sent word at once to Suleiman Wad Gamr, who came to the house of Etman Fakir, a blind man living on the right bank of the river, who has considerable influence over Suleiman, and was his principal adviser during the subsequent proceedings.

Stewart ordered camels to be brought to take him and his party to Merawi. The camels were brought, and the baggage was brought on shore by the soldiers in a small boat, and the camels were being loaded, when Stewart ordered the sheikh to come and receive full payment for them as far as Merawi.

Suleiman Wad Gamr had previously seen the reis Mohammed, and found out from him who the party consisted of. He then promised him that his life should be spared if he would bring Stewart and the consuls unarmed to his house.

On receipt of the message from Stewart to come and receive the hire of the camels, he replied to the effect that he was ruler of that part of the country, that he considered Stewart as his guest, and that if he would come and pay him a visit in his house he would be very glad to receive him, and would then receive half the price of the camels as far as Merawi, the remainder to be paid on their safe arrival at Merawi.

Stewart started to go to the house, when he was met by a messenger to say that if he came with an armed party or with arms the sheikh's people would run away, and requesting him to leave soldiers and arms behind. This was accordingly done, and Stewart, with Power and the French consul, accompanied by their interpreter, the telegraph clerk Hussein, went alone to the house of Etman Fakir.

They were well received, and supplied with dates and coffee. Suleimen went out and called in his men, who rushed in shouting 'Surrender.' Stewart gave up his pistol, and said he surrendered. The consuls were immediately attacked with swords. Stewart fought hard with only his fists, but was overcome. Hussein, the interpreter, caught hold of Etman and protected himself with his body from the blows made at him. He was severely wounded, but not killed. After Stewart and the consuls had been killed the party sallied out and surprised the soldiers, who were busy loading their camels. They rushed for the boat, which was upset. Two men of the Monassir were shot, and the Turkish soldiers were then despatched as they came to the bank; the blacks and Dongolawi men being taken prisoners. The steamer was then looted, but

was not otherwise damaged. The prisoners and papers found were sent to Berber.

Suleiman paid 400 of his men 1¼ dollars each out of the money taken on the steamer for their work."

There was, perhaps, no more striking indication of the far-reaching resources of the British empire than the engagement of the Canadian voyageurs, the grave skilful boatmen and half-breed Indians of the Great Lakes, to enlist for duty in navigating the Nile and guiding the great flotilla that was to carry British soldiers to the remote border-lands and arid deserts of the Soudan. That troops leaving India and the West Indies should be intercepted and conveyed to Egypt was a less striking circumstance than that many of the children of "Red Indians," the Cree and Iroquois half-breeds, should be seen quietly and confidently steering through the land of Nubia to the Land of the Blacks. The greater number of the Canadians undoubtedly did their work well, and the manner in which the pioneer expedition surmounted the difficulties of the river entitled them to confidence. They did not quite approve of the build of the boats which they had to take through the rapids, and thought they would have been better without keels; but they did not, at first at any rate, regard the navigation of the Nile as dangerous, though it was more laborious and difficult than they liked or expected. In the pioneer expedition, too, the boats were manned by the engineers under Major Dorward, and damages were readily repaired. When the river began to fall the volume and force of the water diminished, but the stream had previously run pretty smoothly and with sufficient depth in places that at lower level showed a series of rapids. The soldiers, however, thoroughly appreciated the skill and alacrity of the Canadians, without whose coolness and experience at the helm the voyage could not have been made, even with the help of soldiers and labourers to haul up the boats and to take out the cargoes at the foot of the cataract, to be portaged to the upper end by the Egyptian soldiers. The voyageurs at first rather under-estimated the difficulties, and at Wady Halfa were asking, Where are the cataracts? Colonel Alleyne, too, considered that the second cataract was but a trifling

obstacle as compared with some of those on the Red River. The men discovered afterward, however, that the Nile rapids have peculiar dangers and difficulties of their own which require great skill and promptitude, and it cannot be denied that these qualities were characteristics of the steersmen.

To the voyageurs the aspect of the country and of its inhabitants was of course strange, but they entered on their duties with a cheerful determination to make the best of circumstances, and Colonel Denison had made judicious arrangements for their general comfort. They went the voyage to Assiout in two large barges covered with temporary roofs and fitted up with old-fashioned camp-fires of clay and brick, so that a dozen cooking pans could be set upon them at once. A man out of each gang was selected as cook, to convert the rations of bread and canned beef into savoury messes by the addition of preserved vegetables and seasoning. The men were all in the best spirits, some playing cards to amuse themselves, and others pelting the natives along the shore with bits of biscuit. On arriving at Assouan they were transferred to the cars, which took them to Shellal, and there embarked in the expedition boats, which were tied together with ropes four abreast. One of the men suffered from ophthalmia and was left at the hospital at Assouan. On the 3d of November they were encamped three miles above Wady Halfa, and the next day began the work of taking the boats up the rapids. The correspondent of the *Toronto Globe* who accompanied them wrote: "The men were eager to see who would be the first to get into quiet water above. One of the officers in charge of the boats told me it took from fifteen to twenty natives to take a boat up in a day; we accomplished the same work in two hours with seven men, and not only did we 'astonish the natives,' but the officers of the sailors' camp as well. This was our first stage up the rapids. After waiting two days at the first portage we were divided into four squads. One was left at the first camp, one moved to the head of the first stage, four miles up, and the third squad four miles further on. One of the gangs was sent to the head of the rapids to ascertain what the boats would carry at the pitch which the water had

HAULING BOATS PAST A CATARACT OF THE NILE.

November, 1884.

then reached. Here the foreman of the Caughnawaga Indians was drowned." Another of the same company of voyageurs had been drowned on the 31st of October in the rapids at Wady Halfa.

Major Dorward and five pioneer boats arrived at the Ambigol Cataract on the 5th of November after a very arduous journey with hard rowing all the time. The Canadians were of opinion that the boats were too deeply laden for safety, and that the difficulty and danger would be best met by the army advancing in parties of ten boats at a time. There would then, they said, be enough voyagers to man the boats and take them up through the difficult places.

The ascent of the Ambigol Cataract was a very stiff piece of work, as the height of the river was changing every day, and between Ambigol and Mangol the stream for twelve miles presented the appearance of a continuous rapid, with intervals in which it broke in foam over a rocky bed. The boats passed up the rapids nearest to Ambigol without accident. They were partially unladen. They were then taken up separately, two Canadians taking their places in the boat to steer her, and the united crews of fifty men laying on to the hawsers, and so hauling them one by one up the rapids. The shores near Ambigol were strewn with the timbers of wrecked boats. While the engineers' boats were ascending the rapids Alleyne's boats came down and shot the rapids with great velocity, to the immense astonishment of the native and Egyptian soldiers.

The descending of the Nile is in some respects more difficult and dangerous than the ascending. In ascending it is easy to stop the boat's way by lowering the sail, the current will then sweep her away from a danger ahead. In descending, the current constantly tends to sweep the boat on to any danger in front. In Lord Wolseley's whaler-boats, the masts being struck, the descent by oars was as sure as the ascent, save that greater care in steering was required, and that the rapids, in whole or part, could be shot instead of tracked. A course down a rapid being chosen, the men rowed as strongly as they could in order to get good steerage-way

on the boat. Slack rowing leads to disaster. A man upset in the fairway course of a rapid must inevitably be sucked down and drowned. The nuggar descends in a manner peculiarly her own. She goes stern foremost, with the sail either closely furled or slightly unfurled to deflect her from danger, or to carry her into the strongest downward current. Thus the boat is steered partly by the great rudder acting on contrary currents and partly by the wind acting on the sail. The natives in the Upper Nile valley manage their boats with surprising skill. One instant the traveller will consider, as certain, his destruction on a rock whereon he is being swept by a furious Nile torrent, the next he is in safety, how, he can scarcely say.

It may be very well understood that the Canadians had a very poor opinion of the natives, who would squat by the shore or on a boat, and do nothing unless they were stirred up by the kourbash of the Bashi-Bazouks who were sent by the mudir to keep them at work, and who, in their gaudy uniform and with sashes full of knives and pistols, stalked about among the labourers and waked up the skulkers. The younger generation of Dongolese boatmen and Nubians, however, elicited the admiration of the voyageurs for their cheerful alacrity and the manner in which they would plunge into the river, even amidst a whirlpool, and carry a rope to boat or shore. Many of these young black fellows had what to them was a jovial time. They had more to eat than they were accustomed to, and though they worked hard it was in jolly company, for the rough but good-humoured patronage of the British soldiers delighted these merry fellows, who were quickly initiated into the outdoor sports which even there were carried on by our men; and the "tug of war," the long and the high jump, and other athletic games, well suited the cheerful, active, muscular youths whose black-bronze faces were expanded in a perpetual grin.

It is necessary to pause for a moment to consider what an undertaking this expedition was committed to. The labour was enormous. There were fortifications to dig, the railways to repair and to extend, and the constant business of hauling, tracking, and transporting stores up the cataracts and at the various portages.

In all these operations the British troops were aided, and exceedingly well aided too, by two thousand of the Egyptian soldiers of the army of Sir Evelyn Wood. These men were all stationed at various places south of Assouan, and everybody acknowledged that they did their duty.

The work of towing the boats was enormously heavy, and the whole voyage was so difficult and dangerous that the loss of a percentage of the boats was to be expected. The river banks were altogether unsuitable for towing. Heavy sand, interspersed with trees and rocks, is not easy to walk over under any circumstances; but when dragging a long rope—with a boat at the end of it—which catches in trees and has to be passed round projecting stones continually, the labour becomes severe in the extreme. A correspondent asking two or three voyageurs what they thought of the river as compared with Canadian streams, they explained that the cataracts on the latter are far more difficult and formidable than anything they had yet seen on the Nile. But then on the Ottawa "they guessed" that when they had passed a cataract they generally had a fairly long stretch of slack water; but here the rapids "seemed pretty thick, and came out one top of another a little too soon." When informed that sixty miles further on, the Batn-el-Hajar came to an end, and that they would have two or three hundred miles of comparatively slack water, they ejaculated, "Sixty miles! Then this business is a big job, and no mistake."

The passage of the first or pioneer boats, described by an eye-witness, gives a fair picture of the manner of the voyageurs. "The breeze comparatively was light, and for half an hour I watched ere the leading boat entered the lowermost point of the rapids; which she did in advance of the dahabeeah. The lofty expanse of sail the latter exposed to the wind enabled her, however, to pass again the smaller boat, and slowly, but surely, she breasted the stream, and entering the quieter water above, went on her way but little delayed. In comparison with her the five whalers looked like cockle-shells floating on the current as they swayed across rapidly from eddy to eddy, or paused in mid-stream as the gusts of wind or water caught them. Although deeply laden and carrying nearly

two tons of stores, besides twelve men each, they seemed to have sufficient freeboard, and appeared under perfect control. The leading boat I could see with my glasses carried the native reis told off to act as guide. He stood in the bows beside the Canadian, endeavouring to direct the soldier who steered, but for a long time they remained motionless in the current, making little or no headway. At several points they essayed to ascend, but always apparently found the current too strong, and drifted back again to their former position. All the time the voyageur, seated in the bows filling his pipe, evidently abstained from interfering with the reis. There cannot be two captains to a boat any more than to a ship. But boat No. 2 was all the time rapidly approaching. Her voyageur I could see go aft and take the tiller himself. Coming close inshore he made for a rock, behind which a long eddy tailed for a hundred yards. Up this he sailed with great velocity, and just as, apparently, he was about to collide with the rock he sheered out into the stream, steadied and paused for a moment as his boat met the rush of water—her timbers, as one of the men told me afterwards, quivering with the shock—and slowly but perceptibly, with the aid of a friendly puff, passed over the critical point. Making for the shore again near the opposite bank he entered slack water, and tore on after the dahabeeah. Still the boat under native command fails to ascend, and the other three also lie huddled together in mid stream, their sails flapping between the gusts against the masts. But all, apparently, are put on their mettle by the success of the boat that has gone before them. The men put out their oars. The voyageur who has a native reis to assist him has lit his pipe, and tells, I suppose, that reis to hold his tongue, for the latter sits down quiescent on a thwart, and interferes no more. And then they breast the stream with sails and oars together, taking advantage, as did the first boat, of all the eddies, as far as possible, before attempting to enter the main current. In twenty minutes after the leading boat, the other four had passed; and the first obstacle on the voyage to Dal was overcome."

"But by and by the wind dropped and the channel narrowed,

so that the water flowed too swiftly down to sail or row against. So, putting in to the bank, one-half the crew of each whaler took tow-ropes ashore and began laboriously to track up stream. But in this was seen the advantage of small boats over large. The dahabeeah aforesaid, heavy and unwieldy, had to stop altogether, waiting for the breeze to freshen, while the boats went on until sundown. While they were pulling up against the rapids I was struck with the comparative degree of efficiency the soldiers displayed in the use of their oars. Probably no nation in the world, save ours, could venture to despatch an expedition like this one. For there are few English lads, to whatever class they may belong, who have not one time or other, on river, lake, or sea, mastered the rudiments of rowing. And so, amongst these fifty engineers there were half a dozen found to handle the tiller; some were able from the beginning to display high art in feathering their oars, while all could do their share of work in propelling the craft on which they had embarked. Every day, too, the crews will get more proficient, so that if ever we reach Khartûm it will be with three or four thousand soldiers who are experienced boatmen as well."

The adjectives and expressions employed by the voyageurs savoured very evidently of American backwoods and Canadian lumber rafts. Yet the names of the five Canadians in charge of the pioneer boats were: James Graham, foreman, a complete Scotchman in type, and cautious disposition. Anthony Milks, a handsome Anglo-Saxon, with soft blue eyes and brown hair, of the true old Viking stock. Robert Simpson, another Scotsman in descent; and William M'Nair, and James Elliott, who, although they never saw Ireland, were as evident sons of Erin in appearance and manner as may be found between Dublin and Cork. All five, although not selected men by any means, were of magnificent physique; far above the average of their respective mother countries in that respect; and good enough in every way to be put forward as specimens of the best of the race. There were neither Frenchmen nor Indians in the first boats; and the five Americo-Britons were proud of the fact that they had the pioneer boats of

the expedition in charge, and they were determined to do well with them.

But it was the second week in November before these boats reached Dal, and on the 14th a messenger from Major Kitchener arrived at Dongola with a letter from Gordon to Lord Wolseley dated November 4th, and despatches in cipher for the government. This was the letter referring to the death of Colonel Stewart. The Mahdi was eight hours' journey from Khartûm. The Mudir of Dongola had also received a message from Gordon promoting him and his fellow-notables, and expecting him to fight to the last, as he himself meant to do. The messenger had said that the general illuminated Khartûm in honour of Lord Wolseley and the advancing force, and it was reported that there was plenty of food, and that thirty boats had come in laden with grain from the Blue Nile on the day of the messenger's departure. Another messenger came in soon afterwards reporting that Gordon had been joined by some deserters from the Mahdi's camp. Affairs at Khartûm were evidently approaching a crisis. The Mahdi in all probability hastened his movements, and prepared to strike a blow at Gordon and take the place. He marched up from Obeid with perhaps 30,000 men and occupied Omdurman, only a few miles from Khartûm. Thence he summoned Gordon to surrender the already beleaguered city. The answer returned was:—"If you are the real Mahdi dry up the Nile and come over and I'll surrender." It was afterwards declared that the Mahdi actually essayed to accomplish what Gordon had ironically challenged him to do—that he ordered his followers to march across the river, and that three thousand of them perished in the attempt. He then commenced the attack, but Gordon with his twelve steamers and 800 brave followers, by means of eight hours' hard fighting outside the walls and by blowing up the enemy's forts with mines, drove him out of Omdurman southward to a place called El Margal, where the pretended prophet hid himself in a cave, and gave out that after sixty days of rest blood would flow like water.

Gordon's letter to Lord Wolseley had, as it was afterwards known, disclosed that there were at Khartûm enough provisions

to last forty days, and that he had sent some steamers down the Nile towards Shendy to await the arrival of the expedition.

This will explain the anxiety of the commander to accelerate if possible the passage of the expedition and the arrival of the whole force at Dongola (El Ourdeh), where the headquarters and the camp had been formed previous to the occupation of Korti.

The result was that a prize of £100 was offered to the battalion which should make the best passage from Sarras to Debbeh; and the following general order was issued:—

"To the sailors, soldiers, and marines of the Nile Expedition.

The relief of General Gordon and his garrison, so long besieged in Khartûm, is the glorious mission which the queen has intrusted to us. It is an enterprise that will stir the heart of every soldier and sailor fortunate enough to have been selected to share in it, and the very magnitude of its difficulty only stimulates us to increased exertions. We are all proud of General Gordon and his gallant and self-sacrificing defence of Khartûm, which has added, if possible, to his already high reputation. He cannot hold out many months longer, and he now calls upon us to save his garrison. His heroism and his patriotism are household words wherever our language is spoken; and not only has his safety become a matter of national importance, but the knowledge that our brave comrade needs help, urges us to push forward with redoubled energy. Neither he nor his garrison can be allowed to meet the sad fate which befell his gallant companion in arms, Colonel Stewart, who, when endeavouring to carry out an enterprise of unusual danger and folly, was treacherously murdered by his captors. We can—and with God's help will—save General Gordon from such a death. The labour of working up this river is immense, and to bear it uncomplainingly demands the highest soldierlike qualities, that contempt for danger, and that determination to overcome difficulty which in previous campaigns have so distinguished all ranks of her majesty's army and navy. The physical obstacles that impede our rapid progress are considerable; but who cares for them when it is remembered that General Gordon and his garrison are in danger. Under God their safety is now in our hands, and come what may

we must save them. It is needless to say more to British soldiers and sailors."

As we have already noted, Dongola had nothing to distinguish it in the way of picturesque situation or interesting buildings and monuments. The bazaar was only fourth rate; and there were few attractions notwithstanding the residence in the town of the mudir (who had been made a pasha by order of the khedive), and his resplendent Turkish, Circassian, and Albanian officers, who, according to the wont of their countrymen, had pretty well milked the cow of Egypt, were to be seen gorgeously attired, while the mudir himself was in religious seclusion and wore a comparatively shabby uniform decorated with tarnished lace and two or three sizes too big for him. Sir Herbert Stewart, the English commandant, had been two days in Dongola el Ourdeh before he could obtain an interview with the mudir, who had all along held somewhat aloof and behaved with an assumption of superiority which was supposed to be the effect of his aiming at a reputation for saintliness, and caused his protestations of sincerity and loyalty to be suspected.

The interview between his highness and the English commander took place just before the celebration of the feast of Kourban Bairam, however, and this was the occasion of a very ceremonial reception of all the notables at the government house, the court-yard of which was lined with the black troops and Bashi-Bazouks who had fought at Debbeh and at Korti, and after the reception these soldiers heartily greeted their pasha. Of course the holiday was signalized by sports and observances of various kinds, and equally of course the former chiefly consisted of galloping wildly about on horses and firing guns or beating tom-toms. Our officers and soldiers took a prominent part in them as observers. The mudir had apparently had a faint notion that he would be the commander of the British forces at Dongola, and that the *Nassif-Kheir* steamer, which he visited on its arrival, would be for his especial use; but he was gently allowed to discover that he had miscalculated his authority to exercise more than the civil governorship, and it must be conceded that he took the discovery

in good part, and as he was permitted to make it for himself had the shrewdness not to remonstrate.

It need scarcely be said that the British camp was quite a conspicuous feature in the town, or rather just outside the town—the site for the Sussex regiments having been very judiciously chosen; placarded directions to it and to the commissariat field hospital and mounted-infantry camp being one of the first objects noticed by passengers arriving at the river side on the nuggars or steamers. The 1st Royal Sussex, encamped in rows of tents between rows of date-palms to protect them from heat and dust, were old campaigners, for they had been living almost constantly under canvas for four years, and had adopted all the best contrivances for comfort and the best means for maintaining cheerfulness and good fellowship which could be discovered under the circumstances.

In the 1882 campaign, while this regiment was encamped on the Mahmoudieh Canal, the men had made their tents look something like some of the canvas abodes at Wimbledon by inscribing them with titles such as "The Old Grumblers' Retreat" or "The Cottage by the Sea" mostly by the aid of charcoal; and though they had no leisure there for much recreation, they were worthy to be comrades of Mark Tapley in regard to jollity. At Dongola they remained faithful to their tradition, and held weekly concerts, and by the aid of a part of their band, which had contrived to get to the front, made very successful entertainments. It may be remembered that both the general in command and the officers of the expedition, not only permitted, but encouraged and occasionally stimulated by their personal presence these social amusements, and this will in great measure account for the cheerfulness, and even for the comparatively healthy condition of the men.

Beyond the "Sussex" camp was the commissariat headquarters, a little fortress of bales, barrels, and boxes, the field hospital, in a cool and shady spot, with spacious accommodation for some sixty patients, and occupied by a much smaller number, the average of sick among the troops being under 5 per cent, though a number of men had fallen sick early in the campaign during the passage of

the Nile, and had to remain at the hospital at Wady Halfa or to be returned there.

The mounted infantry camp at Dongola was in the same area beyond the Sussex, the camels being picketed neatly in lines in the plain some 200 yards from the tents. From these lines rose throughout the day a tremendous bellowing, roaring, screaming, and groaning. Save when worn out by fatigue the camel is never quiet. He is never at any time happy; he will mostly bite at the hand that feeds and tends him with the same animosity that he exhibits towards the hand that loads and bridles him. He knows naught of gratitude, is bereft of any of the softer passions, and looks on whomsoever approaches him for whatever purpose as his bitterest enemy. It must be remembered, however, that he has never been much encouraged to regard mankind otherwise. The men and officers of the mounted infantry sought by care and attention to improve his health and appearance by every means in their power. They even went so far as to groom him, an attention to which the camel is altogether unaccustomed, and which at first so filled him with astonishment as to deprive him of the power to protest. Soon, however, it dawned upon him that he was being cleaned, and, his resentment quickly roused, he at once filled the air with hideous roars and groans, which he never failed to renew each time the process was repeated.

It was a remarkable instance of the adaptability of the English, however, that our men who took part in the camel as well as in the horse and pony races which they were conspicuous in starting, although they were not actual winners, got very good places in the front, and yet they had only had about a fortnight's practice and competed with those who had almost lived on camels from their birth.

On the 1st of December the last boat with soldiers on board had left Wady Halfa, and the troops which had not already reached Dongola were then all advancing at various stages.

At Debbeh there were three companies of the Sussex Regiment (35th); at Handak, forty miles in advance of Dongola, the mounted infantry, the Guards camel corps, and one squadron of Hussars—in

all, eight hundred mounted men. At Dongola five companies of the Sussex Regiment, who were preparing to move forward.

On the line between Dongola and Sarras were six sections of the heavy camel corps, six sections of the light camel corps, a battery of artillery, and two squadrons of Hussars. At Wady Halfa three sections of light and four of the heavy camel corps. The marine camel corps was also at Wady Halfa.

The infantry below Dongola were at the following stations:— The Cameron Highlanders (79th) at Korosko; the West Kent (50th) and the Royal Irish (18th) at Wady Halfa; the Black Watch (42d), the Essex Regiment (56th), the Gordon Highlanders (75th), and the Duke of Cornwall's Regiment (46th) all in boats toiling up the long reaches of cataracts between Sarras and Dal; while, also in boats between Dal and Dongola, were seven companies of the South Staffordshire Regiment (38th).

The general impression at Dongola was that the main body of the expedition could hardly arrive at Khartûm before the end of March. The mounted troops under General Stewart were, however, to advance in the following week to Ambukol, and by the end of the month the entire camel corps, the Hussars, and two regiments of infantry were to be concentrated at that place. They would then be prepared to stretch a hand across the desert to Shendy to assist General Gordon, should he call urgently for aid, even if the main body had not arrived at the general rendezvous.

The advanced guard of the expedition was fast assembling at Korti, where it had been announced that a Frenchman, a reputed journalist named Olivier Pain, who was in the camp of the Mahdi and had his full confidence, had been in communication with a clique at Cairo, and that the Mahdi had been supplied with full information of the proceedings of the British expedition, and with suggestions as to the best means of opposing the advance.

The camp at Korti was a pleasant place after the long and toilsome journey, and was likely to be appreciated by the men who had worked on the boats. The tents of the camel corps were pitched under spreading groves of trees extending to the banks of the river, which there took a winding course in broad still

reaches. On the 12th of December Sir Herbert Stewart, with the mounted infantry and the Guards camel corps, started from Ambukol, on the 15th he reached Korti, and Lord Wolseley arrived on the following day. The advance was now being made as rapidly as possible, for the men of each battalion had striven hard in a rivalry with which *esprit de corps* had more to do than the offered reward. Very little regard was paid to native rumours, most of which were found to be false; but the story of the murder of Colonel Stewart still dwelt in the minds of the men, who looked forward to the time when they might be able to punish the treacherous cowards who had committed the crime. This, they discovered, would probably be at a spot some fifty miles above Merawi, where the hostile tribes were said to be assembling. The attention of the whole camp was for a short time devoted to preparations for celebrating Christmas-day. It was known that double rations would be issued on that day, and the regiments had been ordered to collect a vast quantity of firewood, for two great camp bonfires were to be lighted, around which the whole of the troops then at Korti were to assemble in the evening and to hold high festival with songs, amateur theatricals, and various forms of merriment; there was to be no fatigue duty on that day; but the promptitude of the expedition was tested a day or two beforehand by the sudden sound of the alarm, on hearing which the whole force turned out in a few minutes quite prepared to repel an attack if the enemy had been there to make one.

The camp at Korti was a refreshing and even a picturesque place, laid out in broad avenues, kept well watered by coolies from the adjacent villages, who were paid for the work. On the high bank above the river there were evening assemblies of officers and men to listen to the band of the Sussex Regiment. Korti was, in fact, a pleasant and welcome resting-place after the severe labour and hardship of the river and the desert. The men's spirits rose as soon as they had begun to recruit their strength there. All day singing and laughter might be heard in camp; and at night, when the slow water of the Nile shimmered in the bright moonlight, the echo of their choruses might be heard from the

opposite bank, and the dark figures of the men be seen, through the veil of smoke, moving about the camp-fires, perhaps with the silhouettes of two or three camels in the background.

On Christmas night, the day having been observed with no small amount of jollification, but soberly and decent withal, the whole force, from the general in command downward, assembled in a vast circle round an open-air stage erected by the Royal Engineers. There were no lack of entertainers, and excellent music, burlesque orations, comic, sentimental, and patriotic songs, part-songs and choruses, nigger dances, and serenades, topical songs, and other amusing performances were kept going with much spirit in accordance with a regular programme, to which both officers and men contributed, several volunteers filling up the intervals during which the performers had to be brought forward, among them a blue jacket from the *Nassif-el-Kheir*, whose appearance on the platform elicited unbounded applause. It was a striking scene, a creditable and highly enjoyable performance; and probably no finer body of troops was ever assembled, though they were hardened by toil, sunburnt, scarred, and, truth to tell, rather shabbily clad in worn, and many in ragged, uniforms.

Lord Wolseley was there all the time with cheery looks and words and sprightly confident bearing; and the entertainment was to have been repeated on New Year's night, but no more time could be spared for rest or amusement. Tidings of Gordon still holding on, but of the Mahdi gathering his forces, were received. Rumours, many, and often conflicting, at all events tended to show that there must be a rapid move towards Khartûm, and it was determined to push forward a column across the Bayûda territory to Metammeh, and at the same time to pursue the journey by the Nile with a force under General Brackenbury.

The latest news received from Gordon at Khartûm forbade unnecessary delay. His letter, dated November 4th, had said:—"At Metammeh waiting your orders are five steamers with nine guns. We can hold out forty days with ease, after that it will be difficult. The Mahdi is here about eight miles away. All north side along the White Nile is free of Arabs, they are on south and

south-west and east of town some way off. They are quiet. I should take the road from Ambukol to Metammeh, where my steamers wait for you." On the back of the letter was a small plan showing the distribution of the Mahdi's army (20,000 men) and the number and position of his guns.

The arrival of five of Gordon's steamers at Shendy, the fighting round Khartûm, the desertion of some of the Mahdi's followers (the Baggaras), and the report of sickness and starvation in his camp had been made known to General Wolseley and the officers of the expedition by their own messengers before their arrival at Korti; and some hostile bands had been seen on the desert between Debbeh and Khartûm, but none were reported between Korti and Metammeh.

All was bustle and excitement at the camp at Korti after the 16th of December; troops were arriving by land and water;—the various detachments of the camel corps after their dreary ride along the banks, shaken and stiff with the unceasing jog of the animals, to which, however, they had at last become accustomed; the men who came by water and toiled at the oars, strained and burnt, and with stiffened, blistered hands, but all, as the phrase goes, "fit" and in excellent form, and above all, cheery and determined. Though the Christmas-night festivities were permitted and enjoyed, there was no slackening of exertion, and as quickly as the troops arrived preparations were made for what was already known as "the desert march," while the advanced boats of the river column were being sent on to Belal and the foot of what for some reason the war department named the Gerendid Cataract.

It had been for some days pretty well understood that the original idea of making the advance only by river to Berber and thence to Khartûm had been abandoned, and that the only way to rescue Gordon within the time that he might be able to hold out would be to despatch troops across the Bayûda, and the camel regiments had been specially organized for this purpose: the camel battery, camel transport, camel bearers, and camel field-hospital. To those who already knew something of the country and of the desperate

MAJOR GENERAL H. BRACKENBURY, C.B.

BY PERMISSION FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY DICKINSONS.

method of fighting adopted by the Arab followers of the Mahdi this desert expedition was regarded as a difficult and dangerous enterprise; but it had to be done, and to be done as quickly as possible if the sole end and intention of the expedition was to be accomplished. Barely stated, the future plan of the campaign was that the greater portion of the mounted troops under Sir Herbert Stewart was to advance across the desert from Korti to Metammeh, establishing fortified posts at the wells along the route. Sir Charles Wilson was to accompany the column, and on reaching Metammeh was, with a small escort of infantry, to proceed in Gordon's steamers to Khartûm, and having communicated with Gordon to return to Metammeh to report the result to General Sir Herbert Stewart. Simultaneously with the despatch of the desert column, a force under command of General Earle was to be sent up the river to punish the murderers of Colonel Stewart and the consuls, and then to advance to Berber to co-operate with Stewart's force in an attack on the Mahdi before Khartûm under the personal command of Lord Wolseley, who was to have joined Stewart with the remainder of the mounted troops and a force of infantry. Second in command of this river column and chief staff-officer to Major-general Earle was Major-general Henry Brackenbury, C.B., who, up to the time of his arrival at Korti on the 24th of December, had been engaged as deputy-adjutant and quartermaster-general under Sir Redvers Buller, the chief of the staff. From the work of this department he was set free on Christmas-day, and was replaced by Colonel Wolseley, assistant adjutant-general, that he might devote his whole time to organizing the river column, and at the earliest possible moment take a battalion of infantry and a few cavalry to establish an advance post at Handab, above the cataract and near Duguiyet, the point where the desert road from Berber strikes the river. The five troops comprising the cavalry of the expedition were to be divided between the desert and the river column, half to go with each, and the same with the royal engineers (with their equipment), who had made the journey to Korti by their boats. The first battalion of the South Staffordshire Regiment, which had led the way up the

river in the whalers, was to continue to lead the advance, with Colonel Eyre in command.

On the 29th Major-general Brackenbury was ready to start, following half a troop of the 19th Hussars under Captain Aylmer, 26 of all ranks, and thirty horses, who marched to overtake the battalion of the Staffords and a detachment of the 26th company of engineers, who had embarked by river on the previous day. Before starting Major-general Brackenbury went to say good-bye to Sir Herbert Stewart and Mr. St. Leger Herbert, both of whom had served with him in South Africa and who were old and esteemed friends, Sir Herbert Stewart having succeeded him as military secretary to Lord Wolseley, and St. Leger Herbert having been his companion in Cyprus. They were never to meet again in this world.

General Gordon's letter of the 4th of November already referred to contained on the reverse side the names of the Europeans who went with Colonel Stewart in the steamer from Khartûm, and in reference to this the letter said, "I sent Colonel Stewart, Power, and Herbin down, telling them to give you all information. With Colonel Stewart was the journal of all events from 1st March to the 10th September. The steamer carried a gun and had a good force on board." Then, in reference to the steamers sent to Shendy: "With steamers are my journals from 10th September to date with all details and map of Berber." Other paragraphs of the letter, which was somewhat of a series of detached jottings in Gordon's peculiar manner, said:—

"Mahdi says he will not fight during this month, Moharram.

"With him are all the Europeans, nuns, &c.; rumoured all are become Mussulmen. Slatin is there; Lupton, Mahdi says, has surrendered.

"Since 10th March we have had up to date, exclusive of Kitchener's, 14th October, only two despatches: one, Dongola, with no date; one from Suakim, 5th May; one of some [? same] import, 27th April.

"I have sent out a crowd of messengers in all directions during eight months.

"Get the newspapers to say I received letters through Kitchener from Sir S. Baker, my sister, Stanley, from Congo. Do not send any more letters private, it is too great a risk. Do not write in cipher, for I have none, and it is of no import, for Mahdi knows everything, and you need not fear him.

"I should take the road from Ambukol to Metammeh, where my steamers wait for you. Leontides, Greek consul-general, Hauswell, Austrian consul, all right.

"Stewart, Power, and Herbin went down in the *Abbas*.

"A letter came from Mitzakis, the 31st July, from Adowa.

"The messenger had a letter from King for me, but Mahdi captured it. Please explain that to his majesty.

"If journal is lost with Stewart we have no record of events from the 1st March to the 10th September, except a journal kept by doctor.

"Your expedition is for relief of garrison, which I failed to accomplish. I decline to agree that it is for me personally.

"Stewart's journal was a gem, illustrated with all the Arabic letters of Mahdi to me, &c.

"You may not know what has passed here.

"The Arabs camped outside Khartûm on the 12th March. We attacked them on the 16th March, got defeated, and lost heavily, also a gun. We then from that date had continued skirmishes with Arabs. Stewart was wounded slightly in arm.

"On one occasion when river rose we drove off Arabs in three or four engagements and fired their towns. Sent up to Sennâr two expeditions; had another fight, and again was defeated with heavy loss; the square was always broken. This last defeat was on the 4th September; since then we have had comparative quiet.

"We fired 3,000,000 rounds.

"The palace was the great place for the firing. Arabs have the Krupps here, and often have hulled our steamers. Arabs captured two small steamers at Berber, and one on Blue Nile. We have built two new ones, steamers. The steamers had bulwarks, and were struck with bullets 1090 times each on an average, and three times with shot each. We defended the lines

with wire entanglements and live shells as mines, which did great execution. We put lucifer matches to ignite them.

"The soldiers are only half a month in arrears. We issue paper money, and also all the cloth in magazines. All the captives with Mahdi are well; the nuns, to avoid an Arab marriage, are ostensibly married to Greeks. Slatin is with Mahdi, and has all his property, and is well treated; but I hear to-day he is in chains. A mysterious Frenchman is with Mahdi, who came from Dongola.

"Kitchener says he has sent letters, and got none in reply. I have sent out during last month at least ten. Steamer with this leaves to-morrow for Metammeh.

"Do not let any Egyptian soldiers come up here; take command of steamers direct, and turn out Egyptian fellaheen.

"If capture of steamer with Stewart is corroborated, tell French consul-general that Mahdi has the cipher he gave Herbin.

"Hassan Effendi, telegraph clerk, was with Stewart. You should send a party to the place to investigate affairs, and take the steamer."

On the 30th of December a messenger, who had been sent to Khartûm on the 29th of October, returned, and brought into Korti a piece of paper the size of a postage stamp, on which was written "Khartûm all right." It was signed C. G. Gordon, and dated December 14, 1884; and the messenger said he was told to deliver a verbal message, the most important portion of which was, "The enemy cannot take us except by starving us out. Our troops suffer from want of provisions: the food we still have is little—some grain and biscuit. We want you to come quickly. Do not scatter your troops, the enemy is numerous; bring plenty of troops if you can. You should come by way of Metammeh or Berber; only by these two roads. Do not leave Berber in your rear. Keep the enemy in your front; and when you take Berber send me word, and come back by the east bank. Do this without letting rumours of your approach spread abroad."

Surely there was reason for despatch!

No time was lost; on the 7th of January Colonel Stanley Clarke started for Gakdul in command of the light camel regiment

with a convoy of 1000 camels, and on the following day Sir Herbert Stewart's force was on its way.

Having halted at Howeiyat and Abu Halfa, on the morning of January 12th they started for Gakdul, a short march, at the end of which they found that the guards had done admirable work in building a couple of stone forts, and laying out the ground for the camp on such a convenient plan, with paths made and signboards with directions put up, that the men fell into their proper places without confusion. Colonels Dorward and Lawson of the engineers had been busy ordering a small canal to be made, into which water was pumped for the camels: while a reservoir formed of biscuit-tins was filled by a pump from a higher level—a pool above the rock—for the use of the men, who, however, were too thirsty to wait for its coming, and drew the water from the pool itself with buckets and ropes. Here there was a short stay for rest, the formation of a complete station, and the organization of the convoy for the march on the following day. Major Kitchener, who had taken up his quarters in a cave on the hillside, received his orders to return to Korti with Colonel Stanley Clarke's convoy. The officers of the guards had prepared an excellent dinner for their friends, including gazelle and sand-grouse, which had been added to the larder as a delightful change from bully beef and canned vegetables. It had been understood that Colonel Fred. Burnaby was on the way, and the general had much desired to have him with the expedition, though he was, in reality, unattached, and had no regular command. He came in with a convoy, and brought with him Captain Gascoigne, who had been travelling in the Eastern Soudan and the Abyssinian frontier and reporting his observations to the war department. Colonel Stuart Wortley also came in to join Sir Charles Wilson for service with Gordon at Khartûm.

At Gakdul Wells the column had reached a point to which public attention had followed it in imagination. It was the point from which succour was to be carried as rapidly as might be to Gordon—the point beyond which the greatest danger was to be apprehended from the hostile forces of the Mahdi.

For a time—for less than a week, however—people in England anxiously waited to hear what was the next move, but no intelligence of importance arrived, till news came of a fierce attack and a bloody battle fought at Abu Klea Wells.

On the 21st of January a telegram was received from Korti from General Lord Wolseley, and was at once published. It said:—

"General Stewart had a most successful fight on the 17th inst. with about ten thousand of the Mahdi's forces, near the Abu Klea Wells, which are about twenty-three miles on this side of Metammeh. The enemy's force was collected from Berber, Metammeh, and Omdurman, which place, I regret to say, prisoners report was recently captured by the Mahdi, thus releasing men from there to fight Stewart.

On afternoon of 16th inst. Stewart's cavalry reported enemy in position some few miles on this side of wells. It being too late to allow of advance and successful fight, Stewart bivouacked for night. Enemy kept up a harmless fire all night, and threw up works on Stewart's right flank.

On 17th Stewart endeavoured to draw enemy on to attack, but they hesitated; so leaving all his impedimenta and camels under a guard of Sussex Regiment and some mounted infantry, he moved forward in square, all men on foot, and passed round left flank of enemy's position, forcing him to attack or be enfiladed.

Enemy wheeled to the left, and delivered a well-organized charge under a withering fire from our men. Square was unfortunately penetrated about its left rear, where heavy cavalry camel regiment stood, by sheer weight of numbers. The admirable steadiness of our men enabled a hand-to-hand combat to be maintained; whilst severe punishment was being inflicted on enemy by all other parts of square, and the enemy at last driven back under heavy fire from all sides.

19th Hussars then pushed forward to Wells, which were in our possession at five p.m. Enemy left not less than eight hundred dead round the square, and prisoners report the number of their wounded to be quite exceptional. Many are submitting.

Necessity of obtaining water at Wells delayed for some hours his advance on Metammeh; for which place force was, however, about to push on when messenger left Stewart. A strong post has been established at Wells, where tents have been pitched for the wounded, who were doing well.

Stewart concludes his report thus:—'It has been my duty to command a force from which exceptional work, exceptional hardships, and, it may even be added, exceptional fighting has been called for. It would be impossible for me adequately to describe the admirable support that has been given to me by every officer and man of the force.'

I regret to say our loss has been severe; but the success has been so complete, and enemy's loss so very heavy, that it may dishearten the enemy, so that all future fighting may be of a less obstinate character.

General Stewart's operations have been most creditable to him as a commander, and the nation has every reason to be proud of the gallantry and splendid spirit displayed by her majesty's soldiers on this occasion. Our losses have been nine officers killed, nine officers wounded, and sixty-five non-commissioned officers and men killed, and eighty-five wounded. Stewart's force was about fifteen hundred all told."

Yes, our losses had been severe indeed. The list of officers killed comprised the names of:—Colonel Burnaby, Royal Horse Guards; Major Carmichael, 5th Lancers; Major Atherton, 5th Dragoon Guards; Major Gough, Royal Dragoons; Captain Darley, 4th Dragoon Guards; Lieutenant Law, 4th Dragoon Guards; Lieutenant Wolfe, Scots Greys; Lieutenants Pigott and Delisle, Naval Brigade; while the severely wounded included—Lord St. Vincent, Major Dickson, Royals; Lieutenant Lyall and Guthrie, Artillery; Surgeon Magill; and the slightly wounded—Lord Airlie, Lieutenant Beech, Life Guards; Costello, 5th Lancers, contusion; Major Gough, Mounted Infantry.

The feelings with which this intelligence was received in England were marked by more distress than triumph. It was a bitter reflection that so many men who represented the flower

of our army should have been cut down in a contest with the savage hordes who were blocking the way to the town where Gordon was waiting, counting the hours when help might possibly reach him. Public expectation waited also for further intelligence, but the story of the march to Abu Klea and Gubat, the battles at both these places, and the events that followed the attempt to reach the beleaguered city, must be told in another chapter.

END OF VOL. III.

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# THE WAR

IN

# EGYPT AND THE SOUDAN.

CAPTAIN LORD CHAS WM BERESFORD, C.B., R.N.

BY PERMISSION FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY FRADELLE & YOUNG.

# THE WAR

IN

# EGYPT AND THE SOUDAN

AN EPISODE IN

THE HISTORY OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE;

BEING

A DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT OF THE SCENES AND EVENTS OF THAT GREAT DRAMA, AND SKETCHES OF THE PRINCIPAL ACTORS IN IT.

BY

THOMAS ARCHER, F.R.H.S.,

AUTHOR OF "FIFTY YEARS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROGRESS," "PICTURES AND ROYAL PORTRAITS," ETC.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

Story of the Fight for the Nile. Abu-Klea. A Night March. Sighting the Enemy. The Seriba. Battle of Gubat. Sir Herbert Stewart Wounded. Cameron and St. Leger Herbert Killed. A Desperate Struggle. Return to Abu-Kru. Advance to Metammeh. Gordon's Steamers. A Forlorn Hope. Sir Charles Wilson embarks for Khartûm. The Voyage to Omdurman. A Queer Crew. Steaming under Fire. In Sight of Khartûm. Ominous Signs. Too Late! In the Hands of the Mahdi. Retreat of the Boats. Advance of River Column. Battle of Kirbekan.

We have already dwelt with some emphasis on the attitude maintained by the government in defence of their policy, and it is not further necessary to the present narrative to record the various contentions which were taking place in and out of parliament in reference to political consistency and the efficacy of the expedition which had been ordered to the Soudan for the rescue or relief of Gordon at Khartûm. Subsequently,—that is to say in the light of after events,—there were people who strongly declared that a considerably larger force should have been despatched at a much earlier period; others as distinctly affirmed that if the government had been consistent no expedition need have been despatched at all, but that the present force would have been sufficient in number and equipments if the rescue had been possible at the time when it could alone be decided that an interposition was to be exercised. At any rate we have seen that the preparations made were designed to meet all the physical difficulties that would be likely to be encountered, and that from the first the only question was whether it would be possible to reach Khartûm in time to effect the primary object of the enterprise. That object was the rescue of General

Gordon and Colonel Stewart. The latter, as we know, and as the officers and men of the expedition knew before they reached Korti, had been foully murdered, and Gordon was alone, in imminent danger of falling a victim to the fanatic pretender whose hordes were slowly closing on the city. Then it was understood by the men who marched across the Bayûda, the men who were to make their way up the Nile to meet them, and those few who were to remain at Korti till the general was prepared to advance and command the entire force at the storming of Khartûm, that there was a death to avenge and a life to save.

"The primary object of the expedition up the valley of the Nile," said the instructions given to Lord Wolseley before he left Cairo, "is to bring away General Gordon and Colonel Stewart from Khartûm. When that object has been secured, no further offensive operations of any kind are to be undertaken. Although you are not precluded from advancing as far as Khartûm should you consider such a step essential to ensure the safe retreat of General Gordon and Colonel Stewart, you should bear in mind that her majesty's government is desirous to limit the sphere of your military operations as much as possible. They rely on you, therefore, not to advance further southwards than is absolutely necessary in order to attain the primary object of the expedition. . . . You are aware that the policy of her majesty's government is that Egyptian rule in the Soudan should cease. It is desirable that you should receive general instructions as to two points which necessarily arise in connection with the method of carrying this policy into execution. These are (1) the steps to be taken to ensure the safe retreat of the Egyptian troops and civil employés; (2) the policy to be adopted in respect to the future government of the Soudan, and especially of Khartûm. The negotiations with the tribes for endeavouring to secure the safe retreat of the garrison of Kassala may be treated from Suakim and Massowa. You need not, therefore, take any steps in connection with this branch of the subject. The position of the garrisons at Darfûr, the Bahr-el-Gazelle, and Equatorial provinces renders it impossible that you should take any action which would facilitate their retreat without

extending your operations far beyond the sphere which her majesty's government is prepared to sanction. As regards the Sennâr garrison, her majesty's government is not prepared to sanction the despatch of an expedition of British troops up the Blue Nile in order to secure its retreat. From the last telegrams received from General Gordon, there is reason to hope that he has already taken steps to withdraw the Egyptian portion of the Sennâr garrison. You will use your best endeavours to ensure the safe retreat of the Egyptian troops which constitute the Khartûm garrison, and of such of the civil employés of Khartûm, together with their families, as may wish to return to Egypt.

"As regards the future government of the Soudan and especially of Khartûm, her majesty's government would be glad to see a government at Khartûm which, so far as all matters connected with the internal administration of the country is concerned, would be wholly independent of Egypt. The Egyptian government would be prepared to pay a reasonable subsidy to any chief or number of chiefs who would be sufficiently powerful to maintain order along the valley of the Nile from Wady Halfa to Khartûm, and who would agree to the following conditions:—

"1. To remain at peace with Egypt, and to repress any raids on Egyptian territory. 2. To encourage trade with Egypt. 3. To prevent and discourage by all possible means any expeditions for the sale of and capture of slaves."

How strangely these general orders read now! How strangely they must have read even at the time that the two columns were preparing to start from Korti on a march which had already become a fight, not only against the enemy and against the physical obstructions of the desert and the rapids, but against time. The irony of events had made the guarded and almost apprehensive precision with which the government repeated their political formula nearly as ludicrous as their obvious want of knowledge of the actual conditions with which they had reluctantly consented to deal only from their own point of view, whence they saw little or nothing of the real situation.

Lord Wolseley was authorized to conclude any arrangements

which would fulfil the general conditions laid down in these instructions, which went on to say, with what appears now to be sadly amusing solemnity:—"The main difficulty will consist in the selection of an individual or a number of individuals having sufficient authority to maintain order. You will, of course, bear in mind that any ruler established south of Wady Halfa will have to rely solely on his own strength in order to maintain his position. . . . Under certain conditions the Egyptian government would be prepared to pay a moderate subsidy in order to secure tranquillity and fairly good government in the valley of the Nile. Beyond the adoption of this measure neither her majesty's government nor the Egyptian government are prepared to assume any responsibility whatsoever for the government of the Nile valley south of Wady Halfa."

Even with the knowledge which we have acquired from the present narrative—up to the period of the marching of the "desert column" on the way to Metammeh—we read these instructions with a feeling of surprise—almost of pity; but we must remember that having arrived at this point we are more than two months ahead of the date when these general instructions were sent to Lord Wolseley at Cairo, and at that time the majority of people in England were looking forward to the smashing of the Mahdi and a victorious march of British troops into Khartûm for the rescue of Gordon, while others, hearing of steamers sent by Gordon to Shendy, were saying that if Wolseley did not take care what he was about it would be he who would have to be rescued by Gordon. Such were the vague notions and general want of an accurate estimate of the situation while Stewart and Wilson were advancing to Abu-Klea and Brackenbury was pushing forward to Handab, the first rendezvous for the Nile column.

To the first of these—the march from Korti to Metammeh—we will now for a moment return, for to that "desert column," as it was called, immediate steps for the rescue of Gordon had been intrusted, and we have briefly diverged from the story of their arrival at Gakdul to tell of the message that reached England of the ensuing engagement at Abu-Klea.

On the 30th of December Sir Herbert Stewart had as a preliminary movement taken the camel corps to occupy the wells at Gakdul, which were not much less than half of the journey across the Bayûda. The Guards Camel Corps, which had been inspected at Dongola by Lord Wolseley, presented a very imposing appearance. Two hundred stalwart men, wearing their scarlet tunics, thoroughly equipped, and mounted on camels over which they had complete control, somewhat astonished the Turkish officers on the staff of the mudir; and as they filed off in a long line towards the desert, they were evidently fit for the immediate service which they were called upon to undertake. The column was preceded by thirty-four men of the 19th Hussars to act as scouts in advance. These were followed by the Guard Camel Corps, some 380 men and 650 camels belonging to the light and heavy divisions of the camel corps and artillery. The men of these divisions having been temporarily dismounted remained behind, their camels, as well as 500 transport camels, being loaded with provisions and stores. The mounted infantry, 387 strong, brought up the rear. The guards were to be dismounted at Gakdul and were to remain in charge of the stores, while their camels returned to Korti along with those of the other camel corps and the transport, so that the men of the light and the heavy camel corps and of the artillery might be remounted, and the camels of the transport and guards be loaded up again with provisions and with the stores of the Sussex Regiment, which was to accompany the second column to Gakdul. Of course the progress of the expedition from Gakdul to Metammeh would depend on the situation and intentions of the enemy, and of the disposition of the Hassan Ayob tribe, through whose country the column would have to pass. The men who were ordered on service with the first column were in high spirits, and envied "for their luck" by those who were left behind. The preparations kept the camp in commotion, which only subsided as the time approached for the assembly of the force. The camels once laden ceased to groan and scream, and stalked off to the ground marked off for them, presently followed by the guards corps and the

mounted infantry. The baggage camels were arranged in column with from twenty to thirty marching abreast, and with fifty yards interval between each troop. The guards in front and the mounted infantry in rear were in close column of companies ready to dismount and form a square at a moment's notice. Lord Wolseley inspected the whole force, and the little party of cavalry scouts, under Major Kitchener, with six Arab guides, moved off in front. A quarter of an hour later the general gave the order, and the great column got in motion, striking straight across the undulating plain towards the distant horizon, the two thousand camels with their necks stretched out, and their long legs moving slowly in apparently mechanical strides, until the rising dust enveloped them and all that followed in a gray mist, and finally hid from view the whole column, which, broad as was its face, extended for a mile in length. No natives accompanied the column, except the guides who went with the hussar scouts, a few others with a guard of mounted infantry in the rear, a few servants from Cairo, and the camel-drivers.

The first regular wells at which the column would arrive were at Hambok, about forty miles distant, and they are merely holes dug in the sand and deepened as the subterranean waters fall, until either the sides cave in, or the whole excavation is obliterated by the rush of water down the wady during the rainy season. The water is mostly drawn from these and all similar wells in the Bayûda by means of rough skin bags, and is then poured into small earthen cisterns made on the surface, at which camels, sheep, and horses are watered; these wells are rarely more than twenty to twenty-five feet deep.

Near this point, at thirty-eight miles from Ambukol, the wady, which has hitherto been flat and sandy, with very gently sloping sides, becomes much broken, small metamorphic ridges, hills, and lava-like mounds close in, showing that the belt of metamorphic rock intervening between the lower Nubian sandstone and the extensive granite rocks is being traversed. The hills assume curious forms: some, of black basalt, are almost perfectly conical, whilst the rock of which they are composed is so magnetic as

seriously to interfere with the action of the compass in their vicinity; the tops of others are composed of small five or six sided columns, so regular as to resemble artificial paving; others, again, consist of alternate layers of sandstone and lava, and resemble giant fortifications and buildings; whilst all around are strewn globular volcanic bombs of every possible form, hard as glass on the exterior, and when broken found to be filled with sand of different colours. Here, again, are long streams of rock resembling lava which, in cooling, has contracted and divided into regular joints, so that the fossil vertebræ of some enormous beast are closely simulated; whilst, as though carelessly thrown about, here and there are seen the trunks of fossil trees, some of which are as much as thirty to forty feet long. About fifty-five miles from Ambukol are the wells of El Howeiyat, of similar character to those of Hambok, followed by those of Abu Halfa, and next of Gakdul.

On New Year's Day, 1885, the first boats of the Black Watch reached Korti; on the 3d of January General Earle, who had arrived on the 1st, left to join the advanced guard of his river force; and on the 4th the South Staffordshire Regiment passed the cataract and occupied Handab, where the river column was to assemble before going forward. On the 5th Lord Charles Beresford reached Korti with the first division of the Naval Brigade; and on the same day Sir Herbert Stewart, who was not expected back for ten days after the first desert column had marched out to occupy Gakdul, returned, having made such an expeditious journey that he had left the guards' camel regiment in occupation, and was now ready to join them with the second column. The march to Gakdul had been accomplished with great success, and the enemy, taken by surprise, had not ventured an attack. Some prisoners—Awadiyeh Arabs—from the neighbourhood of Metammeh had been brought in, but little information could be obtained from them, except a confirmation of the report that there was a force at Metammeh armed with rifles, and that General Gordon's steamers were on the river below the cataract.

The entire force at Sir Herbert Stewart's disposal consisted

of the first division of the Naval Brigade, 5 officers and 53 non-commissioned officers and men; the 19th Hussars, 9 officers, 121 non-commissioned officers and men; the Heavy Camel Regiment, 24 officers, 376 non-commissioned officers and men; Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment, 21 officers, 336 non-commissioned officers and men; Royal Artillery, 4 officers, 39 non-commissioned officers and men; Royal Sussex Regiment, 16 officers, 401 non-commissioned officers and men; Essex Regiment, 3 officers, 55 non-commissioned officers and men; commissariat and transport, 5 officers, 72 non-commissioned officers and men; medical staff, 3 officers, 50 non-commissioned officers and men. In addition to these there were 304 natives, 2228 camels, and 155 horses. Colonel Stanley Clarke's convoy (with Adjutant-captain Paget of the 7th Hussars), en route for Gakdul, consisted of 10 officers and 706 men of the Light Camel Regiment and 1120 camels.

At the wells at Howeiyat were 3 officers, 30 men, and 33 camels of the Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment, and at Gakdul, 19 officers and 365 men of the Guards' Camel Regiment, 2 officers and 25 men of the royal engineers, and 1 officer and 10 men of the medical staff.

The Guards' Camel Regiment was composed of selected men from the three regiments of guards and the royal marines, with Lieutenant-colonel the Honourable E. E. T. Boscawen of the Coldstream Guards in command, and as adjutant, Lieutenant C. Crutchley of the Scots Guards.

The heavies comprised selected men from the three household and seven other cavalry regiments, commanded by Lieutenant-colonel the Honourable R. A. J. Talbot of the 1st Life Guards, and Adjutant-captain Lord St. Vincent, 16th Lancers. The Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment, composed of selected men from various regiments, most of whom had served with the mounted infantry in South Africa or Egypt, was commanded by Major the Honourable G. H. Gough, 14th Hussars. It may be mentioned here that the detachment of the Essex Regiment was left at Howeiyat and the mounted infantry went on with Sir Herbert Stewart's column. On the arrival of the column at Gakdul the

Guards' Camel Regiment was relieved by a strong detachment of the Royal Sussex and went on with the column to Abu-Klea.

The entire force amounted to about 120 officers and 1900 men, and this, of course, included the provisions for transport, the movable field hospital, and the bearer company.

Sir Herbert Stewart's instructions were to proceed to Metammeh after such rest at Gakdul as the animals would require. On reaching Abu-Klea he was to establish a post there garrisoned by 50 to 100 of the Sussex men as might be required, and then to advance on Metammeh, which he was to attack and occupy, probably laagering his convoy at the wells of Shebacat. Leaving the Guards' Camel Regiment, the detachment of the Sussex Regiment, the naval brigade, the detachment of royal engineers, and three guns of the royal artillery at Metammeh, he was to return with the convoy to Gakdul, whence he was to continue to forward stores to Metammeh, when Colonel Sir Charles Wilson, who accompanied the expedition, was to take the command. In fact, Sir Charles Wilson was to continue the immediate operations for the rescue of Gordon, and the instructions given to him by General Wolseley on the 7th of January said:—

"You will accompany the column under the command of Brigadier-general Sir Herbert Stewart, K.C.B., which will leave Korti to-morrow for Metammeh. Your intimate knowledge of Soudan affairs will enable you to be of great use to him during his operations away from these headquarters. You will endeavour to enter into friendly relations with the Hassaniyeh tribe, and to induce them, if possible, to carry supplies for us across the desert, and to sell us sheep, cattle, &c. As soon as Metammeh is in our occupation Sir H. Stewart will despatch a messenger to Korti with an account of his march, &c.; and you will be good enough to send me by same opportunity all political information you may have obtained, all news of General Gordon, the so-called Mahdi, &c. I am sending Captain Lord Charles Beresford, R.N., with a small party of seamen to accompany Sir H. Stewart to Metammeh, where, if there are any steamers, Lord Charles Beresford will take possession of one or two of them as he may think best.

Any Egyptian (fellaheen) soldiers on them can be converted into camel-drivers and come back here with unloaded camels.

As soon as Lord Charles Beresford reports that he is ready to proceed with one or more steamers to Khartûm you will go to that place with him and deliver the inclosed letter to General Gordon. I leave it open so that you may read it.

Orders have been given to Sir H. Stewart to send a small detachment of infantry with you to Khartûm. If you like you can upon arriving there march these men through the city to show the people that British troops are near at hand. If there is any epidemic in town you will not do this. I do not wish them to sleep in the city. They must return with you to Metammeh. You will only stay in Khartûm long enough to confer fully with General Gordon. Having done so you will return with Lord Charles Beresford in steamers to Metammeh.

My letter to General Gordon will explain to you the object of your mission. You will confer with him both upon the military and upon the political position. You are aware of the great difficulty of feeding this army at such a great distance from the sea. You know how we are off in the matter of supplies, the condition and distribution of the troops under my command, the dates when Major-general Earle will be able to move on Abu-Ahmed, &c. I am sending with you the three officers named in the margin,[1] who will accompany you to Khartûm, and will remain there to assist General Gordon until I am able to relieve that place. It is always possible that when Mohamed Achmet fully realizes that an English army is approaching Khartûm he will retreat and thus raise the siege. Khartûm would, under such circumstances, continue to be the political centre of our operations; but Berber would become our military objective. No British troops would be sent to Khartûm beyond a few red-coats in steamers for the purpose of impressing on the inhabitants the fact that it was to the presence of our army they owed their safety.

The siege of Khartûm being thus raised all our military

[1] Major Dickson, Royal Dragoons; Lieutenant Stewart-Wortley, Royal Rifles; the third to be named on arrival at Metammeh.

arrangements would be made with a view to the immediate occupation of Berber, and to march across the desert to Ariab on the Suakim road. Upon arrival at Metammeh, it is very possible you may find papers or letters from General Gordon awaiting us. You will be good enough to send them to me by the first messenger coming here.

Upon your return to Metammeh from Khartûm you will rejoin my headquarters at your earliest possible convenience."

These instructions were accompanied by the following paper from Major-general Sir Redvers Buller, giving the dates referred to in the previous orders.

"Deputy Adjutant-General.

The following is my estimate of approximate times:—

General Earle's force should, with luck, be in a position to commence its forward movement on the 20th January.

The whole of that force should have moved by the 25th January.

It will, I hope, reach Abu-Ahmed about the 10th February, Berber about the 22d February, and Shendy about the 8th March.

Lord Wolseley's force will commence to reach Metammeh the 16th January, and should be concentrated there with sixty days' supplies by the 2d March. If we hire many camels this date may be anticipated."

This then gives us, as it were, a view of the plans laid down by the general for the accomplishment of the objects of the campaign.

These instructions were handed to Colonel Sir Charles Wilson just before he started with Sir Herbert Stewart's column on the afternoon of the 8th of January, 1885. With him were Major Dickson, who was to be left at Khartûm with Gordon, and Verner of the rifle brigade, who was to sketch the road and to be left as intelligence officer at Metammeh. General Stewart had no apprehensions of falling short of forage on the road to Gakdul. After the first twenty miles from Korti there is at intervals a good supply of *savas* grass, which is good camel's food, and a fair quantity of small wood, chiefly acacia and mimosa. General

Stewart had had no difficulty in keeping the camels supplied on his previous journey. He had lost only twenty, or one per cent of the entire number, on the journey to Gakdul and back, and the men were in good condition. He thought little of the difficulties of the route. The country, both in its conformation and the character of the water supply, strongly reminded him of Seccoconi's country in South Africa. There was, in fact, good water at each of the halting-places to Abu-Klea, as well as in some of the ravines of Jebel Jilig, from which torrents come down in the rainy season forming the alluvial plain a few miles south-west of the road. Crops of dhurra are grown on this plain every year, and the tracks to be seen in the district show that the Arabs keep large herds of cattle. The road is good, the country is level and open, and the ground, with the exception of a few patches of sand between Gakdul and Abu-Klea, is so firm as to enable both infantry and cavalry to march without difficulty, while the weather at that time of year was cool, the nights really cold, and even at mid-day the heat was mitigated by cool breezes.

The march and the night encampment was not, therefore, distinguished by much hardship; the men were full of fun, especially the sailors, who were delighted with their performances as camel-riders, and "steered" or gave orders for steering their strange craft in nautical terms, responding to the jocularities of their commander, Sir Charles Beresford, who bestrode a white donkey. Before reaching the wells at Hambok, however, some of the men suffered from want of water, the supply of which had leaked out of the water-skins, which even here it was necessary to carry in order to secure a sufficient provision for such an expedition. At Hambok the water had been temporarily almost exhausted by the advance troops and camels, and there were but a few pints there, so the march was continued to El-Howeiyat, nine miles further on. There also they found that the wells had been drained by the column that preceded them, and some of the reserve water had to be served out for breakfast, while sentries were placed over the wells till they gradually filled again, when the men were marched up by companies to quench their thirst. The

THE ADVANCE OF THE DESERT COLUMN UNDER MAJOR-GENERAL HERBERT STEWART.

HALT AT THE WELLS. JANUARY, 1885.

march to Abu-Halfa, to the next wells, continued from the afternoon till long after dark over some rough country till the fires of a camp were seen at a distance—the camp of the 19th Hussars as it turned out, whose officer, Major Barrow, had left the column at Howeiyat and gone straight on. There was a good deal of suffering for want of water during the night march, especially on the part of the Sussex men, who had lost the contents of the faulty water-skins served out to them at Korti, and as the supply at Abu-Halfa was short when they reached that place men were set to work to open new holes in the gravelly ground. The water was fresh and sweet, but muddy, and after much trouble to induce the men to come up in regular order for a supply of a pint or more for drinking before they camped down, and a subsequent supply for cooking, three tin biscuit-boxes were sunk in the ground to act as rough strainers or filters and reservoirs, from which the men could bale out water.

We have in a previous page already noted some account of the arrival of the troops at the wells at Gakdul.

The route of the desert column to Gakdul lay at the foot of the long range of Jebel-el-Jilif, which is broken by many ravines, so that after rain-storms there are numerous water-courses which carry off the rain from the mountains. These streams at such times issue from wild gorges, and are said to drain some distant plains, the proof of which is to be found in the quantities of dry brushwood and small timber strewn about, and evidently the collected drift-wood of some such flood. After issuing from these gorges the streams run over a slope of boulders and rubbish which they have brought down with them, and there the water spreads in numerous irregular channels and reunites at the foot of the slope, afterwards following well-defined sandy channels, the banks of which are fringed with trees; after running thus for distances of from a mile to three miles, they again branch off in various directions into smaller channels and are lost in a verdant plain on the south, where it is said that during the rains water is to be found to a depth of three or four feet. In the sandy channels just mentioned, holes are dug, which are, in fact, "the wells," such as

those of Abu-Halfa. It has been stated that a survey party out on this district at Christmas-tide, 1871, induced a sheikh of the Hassaneeyih to conduct them up one of the narrow and precipitous mountain gorges. After passing several pools of water standing in basins worn out of the granite bed, the gorge at a distance of above two miles from the entrance widened out into a valley about half a mile broad, where there was a small lake, the edges of which were fringed with bulrushes and doum palms, while the character of the huts which formed a village, the nature of the vegetation, and the presence of birds and conies showed that the lake was permanent. They heard that several lakes of this description were to be found in the wild recesses of the mountains, but the Arabs were not inclined to say much on the subject.

At about ninety-five miles from Ambukol the Jebel-el-Jilif range changes in character; the precipitous face breaking up into spurs and intermediate plains, and on one of these spurs, about two miles north of the route, are the wells of Gakdul, the water of which is sweet, though the lower wells are mostly muddy and often contaminated by the flocks that are constantly taken there to drink. The upper pools are much cleaner. The granite rock ceases with Jebel Jilif, and the route traverses the upper Nubian sandstone, and, as we have noted, is easily traversed to Abu-Klea, where the "wells" are artificial pits, which require frequent clearing out, but contain a good and continuous supply of water.

Describing the "desert march" in the *Nineteenth Century*, Lieutenant Douglas Dawson of the Coldstreams, speaking of the route to Gadkul from Howeiyat, says: "We were now on the edge of a vast plain stretching to our right as far as the eye could see, while on our left, at the distance of a mile or so, rose the line of black barren-looking mountains that we were to follow the whole way to Gakdul. Just before the halt a capture was made of a man and his family who were watching their flocks feeding quietly in the plain, proving how unexpected an advance by this route must be. The man, who turned out to be a well-known hill robber chief, from his knowledge of the desert was henceforth enlisted as a guide, and remained with us till our return about two months later; the

family, after staying with us some days at Gakdul, were allowed to go home." This, of course, refers to the occupation of Gakdul by the first column, which awaited the return of Sir H. Stewart with the main force. The wells of Gakdul are at the head of a large circular plain or amphitheatre, surrounded by steep black rocks 300 feet high, which are in turn commanded by the ranges beyond: a difficult place to defend against an enemy, who might come suddenly down from the distant ridges on all sides at once.

The garrison of Gakdul, consisting of the guards and a detachment of 400 engineers, all under the command of Colonel Boscawen, had their work to do, as we have seen. For defensive purposes three forts were built on the high ground: Fort Stewart on the rocky hill commanding the gorge leading into the basin of Gakdul; Fort Boscawen, just over the wells, commanding the whole ground round the water and the steep gully by which the water pours into the wells or reservoirs in the rainy season; and a third smaller look-out post on a rocky spur flanking the two larger works. Mimosa thorn and scrub were cut down and thrown so as to block up the gullies leading into the basin, and down which a force might have approached without being seen. The fire from the three forts would sweep the whole amphitheatre, but at a later date Sir Evelyn Wood, when he was in command at Gakdul, substituted a chain of small "pepper-boxes" for the two big forts, and so crowned every ridge within range and ensured our occupation of the high ground. We have noted other improvements carried out, especially in the arrangements for watering the camels and horses by means of pumps, hose, and troughs; so that 3000 camels a day could be watered without much difficulty; and on the arrival of Sir Herbert Stewart's column on the 12th this work was so effectually done that though the poor beasts had had only eight pounds of grain apiece since leaving Korti, the force was ready to push forward on the following day, leaving behind as garrison at Gakdul Wells 400 of the Sussex under Colonel Vandeleur.

Colonel Stanley Clarke had left early in the morning with the return convoy to Korti, and Major Kitchener went with him—an

arrangement which the latter was by no means pleased with. The guards went on with the column, which paraded outside Gakdul and started at 2 p.m., and consisted of 3 troops 19th Hussars, 1st division of naval brigade, with one Gardner gun, half battery (3-7 pounder screw guns) royal artillery heavy camel regiment, Guards camel regiment, mounted infantry camel regiment, 100 Sussex Regiment, and transport and medical service; in all about 1500 men and 2300 camels. A mere handful of men to be exposed to the fierce onslaught of probably 10,000 or 12,000 savage opponents, who, as it afterwards was discovered, had been assembled at Abu-Klea, where they had taken possession of the wells. So far from the approach of Sir Herbert Stewart's force being unknown or unsuspected by those whose knowledge of it was least desirable, the column had scarcely started from Gakdul when a Remington rifle was found on the rocks, near where the men had "formed up," and as they got out to the desert recent horse tracks were seen a little off the road to Metammeh, so that there was no doubt of the advance being known. In about ten miles' march, which occupied rather more than three hours, fifteen camels succumbed, and it was then time to halt and bivouac for the night, for they had to start at daylight next morning—the reveillé sounding at 3.30 and the start just at dawn, about 5.15. The march was over a tract of loose sand, and after above four hours' march the advance halted for the stragglers at the Jebel-el-Nus, an isolated hill of sandstone which made an admirable land-mark. Many of the camels were falling from want of food and from overwork. Recent tracks of horses were seen, showing that some of the enemy's scouts had been on the look-out, and in the distance three or four of their camel men had been observed; but no news was brought in to our main column by the hussars, who were scouting in advance, and none of the messengers sent out had returned. The column, having plodded on till five o'clock in the evening, camped for the night at Jebel Sergain, where the camels were tied down and preparations made for a probable attack, so that the wretched beasts could not move to get a meal of the savas grass which grew plentifully in the neighbourhood,

and the supply of dhurra that could be carried for them was very small.

On the morning of the 16th the column again started before daylight, so that part of the force got away on a wrong track, and it was half an hour before they reached their places again, and the camels were rolling and tumbling about on some very rough ground. In an hour, however, day broke, and the column was on a vast level plain, where tracks of horses and spots where recent encampments had been, could be seen here and there. In front were the hills of Abu-Klea in the distance, and Major Barrow with Colonels Dickson and Stuart Wortley were ordered to push on with the hussars and occupy the wells. Between ten and eleven, having reached the foot of the hills, the column halted for a rest and some breakfast. The spot was at the end of the long plain with steep black mountains in front. There was little time either to rest or to eat, for at eleven o'clock Major Barrow came in to report that he had found the enemy in force between the main column and the wells. With three or four hussars he had pursued some of the Arab scouts into the Abu-Klea valley, where he had seized one man, when a number of spearmen sprang from the long grass, and he was obliged to drop his prisoner and ride for his life. The route from the halting-place of the column to the wells was through a pass of the mountain, and after ascending this and on coming to a ridge, detached bodies of the enemy could be seen on the hilltops in front. There was great excitement among our troops at the prospect of a fight, and Sir Herbert Stewart and Sir Charles Wilson went out to see what was the position of the enemy; the former returning to select a place at which to halt the convoy, while the latter went on to reconnoitre and to join the advance picket of hussars down the valley, whence could be seen a long line of banners fluttering in the breeze and stretching right across the road. There was also a large tent, and the beating of tom-toms, and the puffs of white smoke to be descried in the distance showed that the attack had begun, inasmuch as the rifles of the enemy were being fired at the advanced party of hussars—though it was at too great a distance

for the bullets to reach them. Sir Charles Wilson returned to report that there was a large force in front, part of which must belong to the Mahdi's army, and that a serious encounter might be looked for. About 1500 or 2000 yards to the right of the position occupied by our main force a swarm of savages began to wave their spears and execute a wild dance, after which they commenced firing.

Sir Herbert Stewart had halted the column on a stony plateau, where he gave orders that a seriba should be formed, and one was quickly built of stone and the thorny branches of the mimosa. Pickets were sent out to occupy two hills on the left, where the mounted infantry built a small fort. The hour of nightfall was approaching. It would be dark in less than a couple of hours, and the general determined not to advance till next morning. The enemy's riflemen were creeping up on the right of the advanced post and soon got within range, their bullets whistling about the spot occupied by the picket and becoming so frequent that the men were withdrawn, and still the enemy crept round the right till the cavalry vedettes also had to be withdrawn. It was nearly sunset when our men got into the seriba, and then the enemy's sharp-shooters were firing continuously from the hill already mentioned. This lasted all night as the men lay in position waiting for an attack which was not made, though sometimes the beating of tom-toms sounded quite close, and in the dense darkness, if anyone (against orders) struck a match to light a pipe, or if, in the hospital where there were already some wounded, a light was shown for an instant, the gleam was sure to be followed by a bullet from the enemy. Our men waited anxiously for the morning. Sir Charles Wilson says: "I do not know a more curiously deceptive sound than that of tom-toms: it is almost impossible to localize it, especially when any wind is blowing. I slept near Stewart and his staff close behind the guards, who were in the front line of the seriba and in one of the lines of fire; fortunately there was a little dip in the ground which sheltered us, the bullets striking the opposite slope. The enemy must have kept a sharp look-out, for as one of the surgeons was performing an operation

BATTLE OF ABU KLEA.

British Square Charged by Soudanese. January, 1885

in the hospital the man holding the lantern incautiously turned it towards the hill occupied by the riflemen; a volley of bullets was the immediate answer, succeeded by a steady fire, which luckily did little harm.[1]

The nights were exceedingly cold, and from this the men suffered considerably while they waited for the dawn expecting an attack. As the planet Venus rose in the sky they stood to their arms, for it had been said that this was the usual signal for the assault of the enemy; but there seemed to be some delay or indecision, since though the fire from the hill became hotter and some of the guards and mounted infantry were sent out to suppress it, and though several of the enemy ran down the hill and crept up towards the seriba, and those in the valley had approached nearer, no large masses of them appeared, and it seemed that they did not intend to attack at once, but to keep up a harassing fire. Those of them who occupied the hill were protected by low stone walls. The seriba may be described as an abattis of earth and brushwood, or thorny acacia and sunt trees (*Acacia arabica*) round the baggage, and about 150 yards of protecting stone breastwork some hundred yards further to the front. Major Dickson was shot through the leg, and a few other officers and men were also hit. The fire of the Arabs was becoming serious, and some of their horsemen crept round to the right of the position, but were dispersed by a few rounds of shell. Sir Herbert Stewart determined to march out and give battle, leaving a force to hold the seriba; and after having breakfast under a brisk fire from the enemy the men were delighted to receive orders to form square and prepare to advance.

The square was formed by the guards and mounted infantry in front; the rear face by four companies of the heavy camel regiment, with its fifth company round the angle and on the left face of the square; the detachment of the Sussex Regiment on the right face towards the rear; the naval brigade and the Gardner-gun were between the third and fourth companies of the heavies, whose adjutant, Lord St. Vincent, was badly wounded before the

[1] *From Korti to Khartûm.*

attack. In fact, the moment our men appeared on the high gro to form up, the fire of the enemy was continuous, and many of men were hit before the advance could be made. Some of Sussex and the baggage guards were to remain in charge of seriba, and the 19th Hussars were to operate on the left of square, the front and flanks of which were covered by our sl mishers who engaged those of the enemy. The square be formed our men marched down the valley towards the row of fl which stretched across it, while the hussars moved off to the l to keep the sharpshooters on the hills in check. Several times t square halted and returned the fire with Martinis and the scre guns, with the result that numbers of men were seen streaming from the enemy's right in the valley.

Sir Charles Wilson gives a graphic description of the advar and the sudden appearance of the enemy. "When the skirmish got within about 200 yards of the flags the square was halt for the rear to close up, and at this moment the enemy rose fr the ravine in which they were hidden in the most perfect ord It was a beautiful and striking sight, such a one as Fitz Jam must have seen when Roderick Dhu's men rose out of t heather; nothing could be more applicable than Scott's descriptic It was as if there were portions of three phalanxes with rows men behind.[1] At the head of each rode an emir or sheikh wi a banner accompanied by personal attendants, and then came t fighting men. They advanced at a quick even pace, as if parade, and our skirmishers had only just time to get into t square before they were upon us; one poor fellow who lagg behind was caught and speared at once. When the enen commenced their attack I remember experiencing a feeling pity mixed with admiration for them as I thought they wou all be shot down in a few minutes. I could not have believ beforehand that men in close formation would have been at to advance for 200 to 400 yards over bare ground in the face Martini-Henrys. As they advanced the feeling was changed

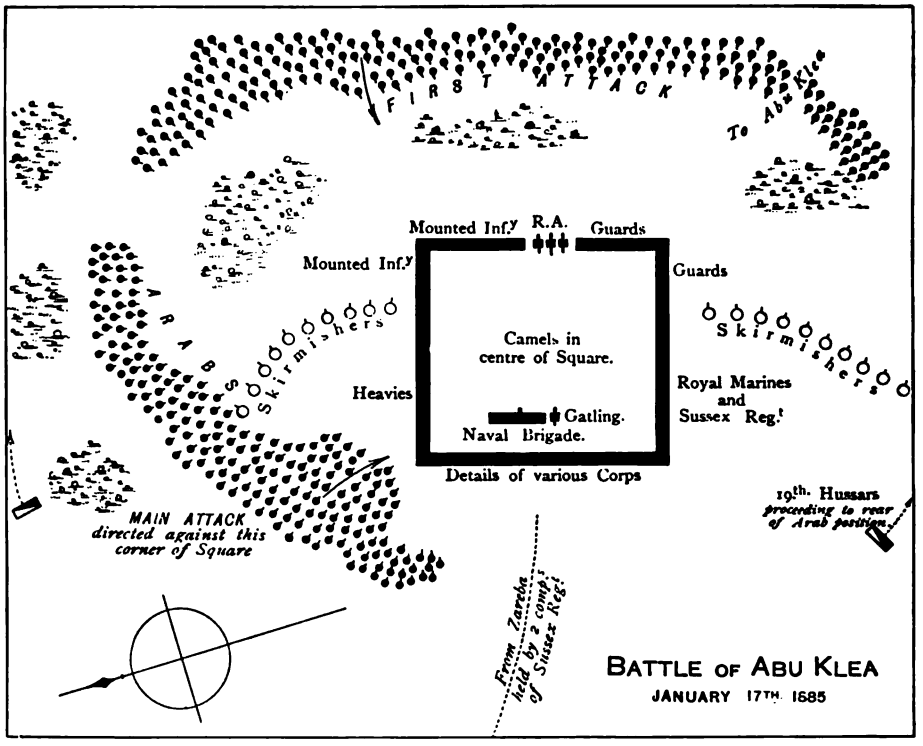
[1] The figure made by the disposition of the Arabs may be said to have resembled a trident, three points of the forks being the front, with an emir or chief at each point.—T. A.

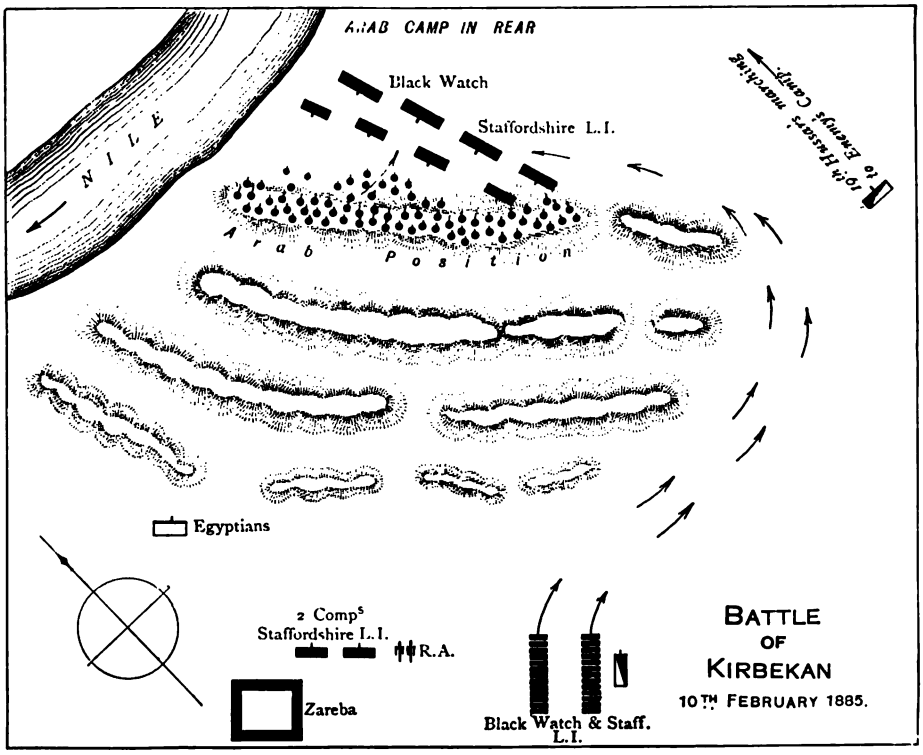
wonder that the tremendous fire we were keeping up had so little effect. When they got within eighty yards the fire of the guards and mounted infantry began to take good effect, and a huge pile of dead rose in front of them. Then, to my astonishment, the enemy took ground to their right, as if on parade, so as to envelope the rear of the square. I remember thinking, "By Jove, they will be into the square!" and almost the next moment I saw a fine old sheikh on horseback plant his banner in the centre of the square behind the camels. He was at once shot down, falling on his banner. He turned out to be Musa, emir of the Duguaim Arabs from Kordofan. I had noticed him in the advance with his banner in one hand and a book of prayers in the other, and never saw anything finer. The old man never swerved to the right or left, and never ceased chanting his prayers until he had planted his banner in our square. If any man deserved a place in the Moslem paradise, he did. When I saw the old sheikh in the square and heard the wild uproar behind the camels I drew my revolver; for directly the sheikh fell the Arabs began running in under the camels to the front part of the square. Some of the rear rank now faced about and began firing. By this fire Herbert Stewart's horse was shot, and as he fell three Arabs ran at him. I was close to his horse's tail, and disposed of the one nearest to me, about three paces off, and the others were, I think, killed by the mounted-infantry officers close by. Almost immediately afterwards the enemy retired, and loud and long cheering broke out from the square. . . . They retired slowly, and for a short time hesitated in the valley before they made their final bolt. During this period of excitement groups of three to five Arabs, who had feigned death, would start up from the slain and rush wildly at the square. They were met by a heavy fire, but so badly directed that several of them got right up to the bayonets. The men did not quiet down until the square was re-formed on the gravel slope, about fifty yards in advance of the spot where it had stood to meet the attack. Many of the officers and men now went out to bring in water-skins and ammunition-boxes from the camels which had been killed. Curious how one's feelings get blunted

by the sight of blood and horrors. There was one strange incident. An unwounded Arab armed with a spear jumped up and charged an officer. The officer grasped the spear with the left hand, and with his right ran his sword through the Arab's body; and there for a few seconds they stood, the officer being unable to withdraw his sword until a man ran up and shot the Arab. It was a living embodiment of one of the old gladiatorial fiascoes at Pompeii. It did not, strange to say, seem horrible; rather, after what had passed, an everyday occurrence. I used to wonder before how the Romans could look on at the gladiatorial fights; I do so no longer."

But there were sights which could not be witnessed with so much equanimity, especially at the place where the Arabs had entered the square. Officers lay there accidentally shot dead, as it was feared, by their own men when the rear rank turned round to fire. This, it was surmised, caused the death of Carmichael and Gough of the Royals; but much that was said at the time and afterwards was conjecture, as was seen when inquiries were made how the corner of the square was broken, or whether it was actually broken at all. Some thought that it was a mistake to place cavalry men from various regiments—detachments hurriedly brought together—to fight like infantry in a square and with an arm they were not accustomed to—a long rifle and bayonet instead of a short handy carbine—and to expect the cavalry man to stand firm when his usual practice is never to be still for a moment when in action.

But there was one bitter and outrageous explanation of the almost desperate position of our men during that brief and bloody contest; when, in the few minutes that it lasted, the Arab spears slew so many, and might have destroyed the whole force but for the hard and determined courage of the British soldier, who will fight while he has a weapon or can clench a fist. Numbers of the rifles—the Martini-Henrys—were useless. The cartridges jammed, being, as Sir Charles Wilson says, made on economical principles, so that they would not stand knocking about. That the Gardner-gun should have got jammed or choked up with sand and grit, and


FIRST ATTACK
To Abu Klea
Mounted Inf.y
R.A.
Guards
Mounted Inf.y
Guards
ARABS
Skirmishers
Camels in centre of Square.
Skirmishers
Heavies
Royal Marines and Sussex Reg.t
Gatling.
Naval Brigade.
Details of various Corps
19th. Hussars proceeding to rear of Arab position.
MAIN ATTACK directed against this corner of Square
From Zareba held by 2 comp.s of Sussex Reg.t
BATTLE OF ABU KLEA
JANUARY 17TH. 1885


ARAB CAMP IN REAR
Black Watch
Staffordshire L.I.
NILE
19th Hussars' marching to Enemy's Camp.
Arab Position
Egyptians
2 Comp.s Staffordshire L.I.
R.A.
Zareba
Black Watch & Staff. L.I.
BATTLE OF KIRBEKAN
10TH FEBRUARY 1885.

so have ceased firing, may have been unavoidable; and the sailors were hurled back with the inrush, their officers fighting and some of them falling round the now useless gun; but that the men who had to stand the fierce and desperate charge, the cavalry men as well as the infantry, should have had to throw down their ineffectual rifles and take to the bayonets, perhaps in many instances to find that, like the bayonets of the troops at Suakim, they bent like blades of tin, was a horrible experience, for which, even in that dread moment, many a curse not loud but deep may have been forgiven. The Gardner had jammed at the tenth round, and the Arabs ran in at the opening, as they did at Tamai, the corner of the square being crushed in. The naval officers were knocked over by the rush, including Sir C. Beresford, who, however, was up again in a moment.

Amidst it all the demeanour of the Guards' officers was noticed. Without noise or fuss they gave orders as though they were on parade, and spoke to their men quite quietly as though nothing unusual was going on. It was said that not a single Arab passed through the ranks of the Life Guards and the Blues.

Burnaby, seeing that the heavies must be opened out and that the Gardner must have room to play, rode forward, and met his death fighting like a knight of old, and with his vast strength and terrible sword cleaving his way until his horse was brought down and the Arab's sword was in his neck.

There was for some time a good deal of contention on the subject of the manner in which the Arabs made their way into the square, and therefore the subsequent explanation made by Lieut.-col. the Hon. R. Talbot in *The Nineteenth Century* was regarded as important, since that officer was in a better position than most of his comrades to observe and to record the part taken in the battle by the heavy camel regiments of which he was in command.

The total strength of the regiment was 390. *Right wing:* 1st company—1st Life Guards, 2nd Life Guards; 2nd company—Royal Horse Guards, Queen's Bays. *Left wing:* 3d company—4th Dragoon Guards, 5th Dragoon Guards; 4th company—Royal Dragoons, Scots Greys; 5th company—5th Lancers, 16th Lancers.

By the time the attack took place the company of the Royals and Scots Greys (No 4) had been partly moved from the rear to the left face to fill up the gap caused by the gradual lengthening out of the sides of the square, due to the impossibility of keeping up the strings of camels carrying litters for the wounded, ammunition, and water. By this movement the rear of the square was considerably weakened.

The route taken was parallel to, and a few hundred yards from the wady, or shallow ravine, that ran on the left to the wells of Abu-Klea, in which grew stunted trees, and thick high grass concealing deep water-courses, giving admirable cover for the enemy, and the course of the march was up and down, and across steep hillocks of hard sand which sloped towards the wady, and it was commanded by hills to the right and rear occupied by Arab riflemen. It was trying ground for camels, hardly a yard of it being level, and also for the Gardner-gun, which was hauled by the blue-jackets.

It will be remembered that the enemy's sharpshooters were firing upon the flanks and rear of the square directly it had started to march from the seriba, and that many men and some officers were killed or wounded; among the latter, Lord St. Vincent and Major Dickson. Skirmishers from the Heavy Camel Regiment were sent out to the rear and the rear flanks to silence the fire of the enemy, and at the same time Lord Charles Beresford and other officers were expressing their concern at the difficulty in keeping the rear closed up because of the manner in which the camels dragged out. Thus, the form and the strength of square were impaired, and the camel-drivers sidling and edging away from the fire of the enemy's riflemen on the right rear pressed out the left corner of the square, though the Gardner-gun was kept up by the grand exertions of the sailors in spite of the interference of the camels. After a very slow march of about two miles the enemy's flags were seen to be in motion, and a large force of Arabs at about 500 to 700 yards' distance sprang up and advanced as if to attack the left leading corner of the square. The square was at at once halted and moved to the right on to a slight elevation, a simple movement for men but difficult for camels, many of which

remained outside the square when it was halted—that which carried the wounded Lord St. Vincent among the rest. There was a gap in the left face of the square through which the Gardner-gun was taken into action until it jammed. The wady on the left then became alive with Arabs, a solid column of whom were to be seen emerging; but our skirmishers were still out and were fully occupied exchanging shots with the sharpshooters, so that they did not readily enough perceive the attack on the main body. Therefore the fire of the rear of the square had to be reserved, and the officers had to prevent the men from taking up the fire of the guards and mounted infantry till the skirmishers had return into the square. Major Byng was the last but one to get back the last man of all was overtaken and speared. Almost with return of the skirmishers came on the great body of Arabs, led their chiefs on horseback, quite unshaken by the fire from the r portion of the square; for until that moment the Heavy Regiment had withheld their fire, which was then delivered advancing column. Taking advantage of the opening in square, the Arabs hurled themselves with terrific rapidity and upon it. The company of the 4th and 5th Dragoon Guards l a few moments before been wheeled outwards by Colonel Burnal with the intention, as Lieutenant-colonel Talbot understood, of bringing their fire to bear; "but no sooner did he see that, not only on the flanks but on the rear, the attack was being developed, than he rode in front of the company and shouted to the men to wheel back. The order was obeyed, the men stepping steadily backwards. Before they had got back into their original place the Arabs were in through the interval thus created, and through the gap already existing at the left rear corner of the square. Burnaby, whose horse had fallen, was one of the first to be attacked, and as he lay on the ground he received a mortal wound in the neck from a sword cut."

The Royals, Greys, 5th Lancers, upon whose rear the camels pressed, hampering their free movement, were now attacked in rear by those of the enemy who had succeeded in passing the 4th and 5th Dragoon Guards, coming through and under the camels,

at the time that they were engaged with the enemy in front. "A severe hand-to-hand fight ensued, in which the strength and determination of our men told, and not an Arab escaped alive. The affair was a matter of moments, and from first to last not more than five minutes elapsed. The fire of the mounted infantry principally and of the Guards Camel Regiment (who faced their rear rank about), of the detachment of the Sussex and of the right wing of the Heavy Camel Regiment, prevented the Arabs from reinforcing their attacking column; but the brunt of the fight, the hand-to-hand encounter, was borne by the left wing of the last-named regiment. No men could have fought better, and although two detachments lost their officers, their places were at once assumed by the non-commissioned officers. It was an Inkerman on a small scale—a soldiers' battle; strength, determination, steadiness, and unflinching courage alone could have stemmed the onslaught."

The force which formed the column under Sir Herbert Stewart was composed of the flower of the British army. The commander repeatedly said that no more splendid body of men could be found—picked shots—men of stamina and strength; and Lieut.-colonel Talbot declares that in the events that happened no credit belonged to one corps more than another. The brunt of the attack fell upon the left wing of the Heavy Camel Regiment and the Naval Brigade, and they acquitted themselves to the satisfaction of their general, but not a bit better did they acquit themselves than others of the column would have done. They all did their work in the several places in which they found themselves. He also says, "No cavalry soldier ever wishes to be separated from his horse except when honoured by being selected for some exceptional service like the advance across the Bayûda desert. But having been called upon, their general, at all events, was of opinion that no troops could have done better under the circumstances than those upon whom the shock of the fight fell. Certain it is that no one regiment, either cavalry or infantry, could have supplied an equal number of highly trained, active, strong, efficient men, selected from their regiments for general efficiency and good shooting."

Sir Herbert Stewart issued the following written order:—

*Brigade Orders by Brigadier-general Sir H. Stewart, K.C.B.*

"Abu-Klea, January 13, 1885.

The brigadier expresses the most sincere thanks to the officers and men under his command for the exertions they made during the march from Korti; these were crowned yesterday by a triumphant victory which proved once again—so often proved before—that the courage of British soldiers when united with discipline is more than a match for any number of savages. The brigadier knows well what work the men are doing, and he regrets sincerely the exceptional labours he is obliged to ask from them in a trying climate under privations of food and water; but he is confident that they are animated by the same spirit that supports him, and feels that, if the trials are exceptional, the honour of being called on to undertake them is exceptional also. The brigadier-general deplores deeply the loss of so many brave comrades, and laments they were not spared to share the high reputation for fearlessness and discipline which was earned by them equally with the living. The brigadier asks the men for another display of courage and self-denial. We have to reach the Nile, a distance of twenty-five miles, and when that is done a large part of our work will be ended, and a feat will have been achieved at the end of which every man can say that he has indeed striven to do his duty."

This was the last order issued by a commander of whom Lieut.-colonel Talbot, sharing the opinion of other officers who admired and loved the chief of the Bayûda column, says he "was one of the ablest, most intrepid of generals. He inspired all under him with confidence and devotion. Had he lived, a great career was before him. His loss was irreparable at the moment it occurred, and what it may be to this country in the future cannot be estimated."

Lieutenant Dawson gives a stirring and vivid picture of this battle, fought in a few minutes, and followed by a march forward towards the place, to reach which quickly, every effort had to be used. He says:—

"As we advanced we covered our front and flanks with skirmishers, who engaged those of the enemy. The latter worked wonderfully, the ground lending itself to their game. This drew the fire to some extent off the square, which, however, advanced *at slow march* steadily, and with only a halt every now and then to load up the wounded on the camels. We kept always on open rocky ground; to the left was the 'wady' or gully, a deep pass of grass and bush-grown sand intersected with innumerable water-channels down which in rain-storms the water evidently tears. These gullies would have rendered our advance with camels, and guns dragged now by hand, nearly impossible; and we also thus avoided ground where the enemy could hide and collect close to us unseen. Meanwhile, the hills on each side were swarming with them moving parallel—sharpshooters and spearmen. When about 1500 yards from the line of flags, the guns sent four or five shells right among them, and we saw hundreds of them spring up and bolt. On nearing the flags, so little could be seen of the enemy there that the skirmishers sent word to ask if they might go down and take them, and all seemed to think that most of the Arabs were gone. One of our officers, who had been at Teb and Tamai, said to me, 'There is no one there; it is merely a burial-ground;' and Sir Herbert Stewart laughingly said to Burnaby, who was in immediate command of the square, 'Move a little more to the left; I want that green flag.'

Just at this moment, when about 450 yards from the flags, as if they had risen from the earth, up rose a line of spearmen all across the wady, and at the same moment the whole wady behind appeared black with them. I should say about 5000 in number, they came on, headed by men on horses, next to whom came the flags, and behind them an overwhelming mass of spears seemed to be going to envelop the whole square. The charge was at the left front corner of the square (they know the corner is the weakest, and always charge there), but having yelled to the skirmishers to run in, the mounted infantry gave them such a fire as to sheer off the main attack towards the left rear corner, where was the Heavy Camel Regiment. Here I afterwards heard

two gaps had been created—first, by the jamming of the Gardner-gun which was in the angle, and which, I suppose choked by sand, went wrong after firing two or three rounds; second, the camels laden with the wounded having lagged behind could not be got inside the rear face. This latter may be partly accounted for by the fact that, just as the enemy appeared, Burnaby ordered the square, which was halted, to advance a few yards so as to occupy ground giving complete command on all sides. The well-known reluctance of the tired camel to rise in a hurry will account for the fact that at the charge many were outside the square and consequently deserted by their drivers, who bolted inside; indeed, had it not been for the promptness and gallantry of an
who saw this, all the wounded would have been speared ou
At any rate, the advancing mass came on nearer and
undeterred by the tremendous fire they were exposed to.
the firing at this moment did not stop the front ranks
enemy is shown by the fact that all the flags coming on,
up in the air, were being riddled with bullets, and seeing t
found myself near the left face trying with others to induce
men to aim lower. By this time they were against us ha
hand. I saw Burnaby on his horse outside the square doing great execution with his sword, then he disappeared, then by sheer weight we were driven back step by step—past Beresford's now useless gun, where nearly every man belonging to it was speared as he stood and Beresford himself knocked down (I saw him on his legs again in an instant)—past where Stewart and Wardrop were trying to stem the rush, and Stewart's horse by sheer weight was knocked off his legs and speared; till the gradual retirement of the left face brought it close to the rear of the front face. Thus the left face of the square had made a wheel backwards. Frantic shouts to the guards to stand firm were not really required. We shouted ourselves hoarse, but it was not necessary. It looked at this moment as if the last two remaining sides of the square must be swallowed up by the hordes surrounding us. So much so that seeing my brother a few paces off I rushed to him, shook his hand hard, and returned to my place. But

the front and right sides never moved, and though from some descriptions of this fight it would appear as if the square travelled some distance during the mêlée, I can confidently assert that the front face was in exactly the same position when all was over as when first halted to receive the charge. Setting their feet apart for better purchase, our men refused to budge one inch; we put our rear rank right about; and they shot down or bayoneted every Arab that came near them, and then, to my surprise, I saw the forest of flag-poles (bare by now) and spears halt, waver, and slowly move back. Then began the most indiscriminate firing of the whole time, and I fear at this time many of our poor fellows lost their lives. Among my own men I was surrounded by representatives from nearly every regiment in the force, who all began firing *into* the square at the retreating enemy. I should think twenty or thirty rifles went off just in my ear, fired over my head, past my head, anywhere. . . .

I shall never forget the slow sullen way in which the Arabs retired, every now and then turning round to look and stop as if anxious to come on again, and often ten or twelve would jump up from the ground and rush on till the rattle of rifles stopped them for ever. At last three or four would rush on the square, and finally one man alone. When 500 yards off we got the guns on them with grape, and this hastened the retreat and left us in possession of the ground."

It should not be forgotten that, though the march across the Bayûda was not strictly speaking a "desert" march, the necessity for going slowly to spare the camels and yet of moving continuously, not only greatly fatigued the men, but made it necessary to carry food and water, of which only a small quantity could be served in rations. The allowance of water was two pints a man per day, and it may therefore be understood with what avidity the soldiers, no less than the camels and horses, sought to slake their thirst at the wells, where the water was mostly of the consistency of pease-soup. Nor had the experiences of those soldiers who had marched from Wady Halfa and followed the expedition from Korti been less arduous. An

officer, writing home after reaching Korti (on the 12th of January) said:—

"I will just give you a rough outline of our journey across more than three hundred miles of desert. We left Wady Halfa at daybreak on the 11th December about one hundred strong, and about one hundred and fifty camels, and marched fifteen miles that day to Gemai, which is just at the foot of the Great Cataract (fourteen miles long). We marched by the river that day, and so had a grand view of the cataract. You must not think that the water falls in one great mass, because it does not. The river at this spot is about three-quarters of a mile wide, and for fourteen miles it is studded with innumerable rocks, and the force of the current coming down on them causes the water to rush over them in volumes, forming awful whirlpools, the noise of which we could hear a long time before we saw them. Well, we reached Gemai about four that afternoon, and camped for the night, and slept the sleep of the just (and tired). The next day we continued our march along the river to Sarras, nineteen miles; the next day to Semneh, and there we entered the desert. Our first day's march after leaving Semneh was very rough, over mountains of black rock, just as if huge pieces of stone had been piled up promiscuously; and over these we had to pick our path, one after the other, and leading our camels, as it was impossible to ride them over such a rough road. However, we got over it all right, after losing one camel, which fell down and could not get up again. We continued our journey after that for some days, and very warm we found it, I assure you. We were always up an hour before daybreak, and away as soon as the sun showed; and there we would continue on in the saddle from six A.M. until five at night, with the sun pouring down on us straight overhead, and beneath us loose sand as far as the eye could reach. The sun seems to rise out of the sand, and go down into the sand again. So we travelled on for days and weeks, only touching the river now and then—about every three days—to get fresh water and to water our camels; and what joy there was when the river came in view, after being parched with thirst. I have often felt as if I

would have given all I possessed for a drink of cold water. I never felt the want of water before, but it is fearful. I would much sooner go without food than water. We used to carry our water-bottles full (about a pint and a half); but what was that in the scorching desert? The sun soon burnt our faces and hands nearly black, and my lips were all cracked; and sometimes when I opened my mouth to eat a biscuit, being so hard, they would bleed. My eyes were quite red; and altogether, when we reached Korti we were a warm-looking lot—and so, in fact, are all the troop up here. So we have to laugh, and congratulate one another on our good looks, and wonder what the people at home would say if they could but see us, all burnt up, while they are frozen out.

I must tell you how I enjoyed my Christmas dinner—something grand, you can guess—about the queerest Christmas dinner I ever dreamt of having. We were about twelve miles from Dongola, when we halted on Christmas-eve, and on Christmas morning at daybreak we started once more, with our dinner in our haversacks. It consisted of tinned beef, biscuits, and raw onions, washed down with a drink of Nile water, and consumed in the saddle about mid-day. We got to Dongola about three, and then after our 'ships of the desert' were fed and picketed all correct we went for a bathe, having been without a wash for three days. We jumped into the Nile, and chanced the crocodiles, and had a good cooler; after which we washed our only shirts and waited for them to dry. After that we had a bit more 'bully' (beef) and a pipe, and we all felt as well as if we had dined off the best, and went to bed happy, after sitting round our camp fire for an hour, having a few songs and a war-dance by the Arabs. I must tell you that although it is so very hot during the day it is equally cold at night, and a fire is very essential. Next day we continued our march to Handak or Shabadool, from thence to Debbeh, and from Debbeh to Ambukol, and then on to Korti, and are now ten days' march from Khartûm. There is an enterprising Greek who managed to get here somehow or other, and has opened a small store. I will just tell you a few things that he sells. Milk cheap; jam, 4*s.* a tin; candles, 5*s.* a pound; and matches, 6*d.* a box. He also makes pancakes with

doura flour (black flour) and water, sprinkled with a little sugar; these he sells at 6*d.* each, and has purchasers. We get fresh meat here and black bread, but it is not bad. We had worse at some places along the road, and the last two days they have given us bacon and cheese; and to-day the wonderful Nile comforts have come to light, for they gave us an issue of pickles; so we cannot grumble about our rations now, but be thankful we get what we do. We get no liquor whatever, have seen no beer for months, and had only two or three tots of rum since I have been up the Nile; so we are a teetotal army. Before you get this I shall probably be in Khartûm—that is, if I manage to get through the bit of fighting that we expect shortly. We captured a convoy of flour and dates going to the Mahdi the other day; they were brought into camp with the prisoners. There were about five hundred sacks of doura (corn for camels), and the same quantity of dates, which went into our army stores. We did not lose a single man."

The condition of the men after the short but tremendous struggle at Abu-Klea was not such as to suggest an immediate advance even as far as the wells themselves; but Sir Herbert Stewart decided not only to push on for that distance, but to continue the march to Metammeh next day, rather than wait for reinforcements, for delay was dangerous; the Mahdi seemed to be preparing to crush the British column, and as soon as the occupation of Gakdul was known his troops were set in motion. Gakdul was occupied by Sir Herbert Stewart at 6.45 A.M. on the 2d January. On the 4th Muhammed el Keir, the Emir of Berber, ordered his men to go to the assistance of the Emir of Metammeh. Omdurma was taken between the 6th and 13th, and the battle of Abu-Klea was fought on the 17th. The enemy had thus thirteen days to concentrate at Abu-Klea; and Metammeh, the place to which Sir Herbert Stewart was hastening the British column, was 176 miles from Korti and only about 90 miles from Berber and 98 from Khartûm.

The battle at Abu-Klea was no sooner over and the retreating

Arabs were scarcely out of sight when Barrow, who, with his hussars, had kept in check a large body of the enemy, rode up. His horses were too tired and too done up with the march and through want of water to be able to pursue the enemy or to act efficiently as cavalry; but he was sent at once to occupy the wells.

The situation was critical and difficult, but there was no time for hesitation, nor was Sir Herbert Stewart the man to hesitate in making a bold decision. The Mahdi's forces at Metammeh were preparing for an attack, and had, it was understood, formed an intrenched camp there. Though the attempt to overwhelm the British force at Abu-Klea had failed, the experience of El Teb and Tamanieb went to show that the battle would not be regarded as final, and that the enemy would renew the conflict and fight even more desperately. The serious question was, whether with such a handful of troops a general could determine to march to Metammeh, and storm an intrenched position defended by perhaps ten thousand of the Mahdi's followers, many of them armed with rifles and possessing at least three guns. Of the two thousand men who left Korti only about fifteen hundred fought at Abu-Klea, the others having been left either in hospital or to guard the wells at Hanbok, El Howeiyat, and Gakdul. Of the fifteen hundred, a hundred and fifty were *hors de combat*, and when a guard was told off to hold the hospital and wells at Abu-Klea and the wells at Shebacat, the effective force which would have to meet the enemy at Metammeh would not much exceed a thousand men. Would he fall back on Abu-Klea and wait for reinforcements, or push on in the direction which would lead him to strike the Nile above or below the enemy's position, and there wait for the arrival of General Earle's river column?

That the advance would be against great odds was obvious enough, and though we had been victorious at Abu-Klea we had suffered serious loss. Our success had been dearly purchased. The death of Lieutenant-colonel Fred Burnaby was not perhaps the chief calamity of that short and bloody struggle, but it was the most illustrative of the kind of price we might have to pay

for inflicting repeated defeats upon a savage horde by which our small expedition was vastly outnumbered. Burnaby himself was in a peculiar sense a representative officer, though he cannot be said to have given a personal example of military discipline and obedience to authority, since he was constantly engaged in some enterprise of exploration, adventure, or hard fighting to which he had not been officially appointed; he was, largely in consequence of this irregular habit of claiming a kind of roving commission, so well known in various parts of the world for dauntless and sometimes eccentric bravery and for his often demonstrative personality, that his name seemed to give a more significant emphasis to the list of the slain. Lieutenant-colonel Burnaby had, so to speak, held a prominent place in society, and had repeatedly attracted public attention since he was a schoolboy at Harrow, one of the biggest boys for his age, who ever learned and fought and played there. He was sent to Harrow from a grammar-school at Bedford, his father, the Rev. Gustavus Andrew Burnaby, being vicar of St. Peter's and Canon of Middleham, and residing at Sowerby Hall, Leicestershire, where young Burnaby was born. At Harrow Burnaby was distinguished, not only for his height and strength, but for his physical energy and athleticism. He did not finish his education at the famous school, however, but was sent under private tuition to Germany, where he devoted himself to the study of modern languages, so successfully that his acquirements were of great service in his subsequent wanderings. It was said at the time of his famous ride to Khiva and his expedition to Asia Minor that he had a writing as well as a speaking acquaintance with nine languages, including Arabic and Russian, with his knowledge of which he challenged anyone in England to compete. In 1858, at the age of sixteen, he returned to England and passed his examination for military service, and the next year was gazetted as cornet in the Horse Guards (Blue). Two years afterwards he was made lieutenant, got his company in 1876, was major in 1879, lieutenant-colonel in 1880, and obtained his regiment in 1881.

His personal appearance, whether he was on horseback on

parade or sauntering down the street, was sure to attract attention, for he was six feet four inches in height, and of a frame which gave evidence of such prodigious strength as we usually associate with the stories of Cœur de Lion, of Danish or Saxon warriors, or of "the Douglas." His energy and endurance were as remarkable as his enormous muscular power; and while he is said to have used for exercise a ponderous dumb-bell which an ordinary man could scarcely raise from the ground, his long and arduous journeys and the apparent indifference with which he encountered vicissitudes of climate that would have deterred or delayed other men, raised the admiration if not the wonder of those who read or heard of his travels, in which he was accompanied by his brave and faithful "orderly," Radford, a man even bigger and perhaps of greater muscular power than himself, but with less endurance under prolonged exertion and exposure, so that, though he rallied from the effects of a wild journey in Asia Minor, he succumbed to the privations which had to be endured when he accompanied his master to the scene of the Russo-Turkish war.

Personally Burnaby was the kind of man who is popularly regarded as the typical Englishman: of great strength, equable temper, simple unostentatious manners, and so little addicted to luxury that not only did he live with great plainness, though he of course consumed a considerable quantity of steak or joint, but he had an aversion to "an establishment," and would not put his house on the usual footing with regard to the number of servants. In fact, the restless spirit of adventure which took the lord of the manor of Sowerby so frequently from home for months at a time made an establishment unnecessary so far as he himself was concerned, and he cared little or nothing for what is known as fashionable society. One amusing story is told of his extraordinary strength at the time soon after he had joined the Blues and when the regiment was at Windsor. A horse-dealer, who owned a pair of remarkably small ponies, had taken them to the royal town by command of the queen, that her majesty might see them, and was induced first to exhibit them to the officers of the Blues. Captain Burnaby's rooms were on the first-floor, and it was agreed that

they should be brought there. After a little trouble in getting the little animals upstairs the door was opened and they trotted in to the great amusement of the party; but it was soon discovered that they had an insuperable objection to going *down*-stairs, and as the time was approaching when they were to be taken to the castle their owner was in a fright. Burnaby, however, got over the difficulty by taking up a pony in each arm and carrying them down to the courtyard. It is needless to enter at length upon the story of Burnaby's travels. Those erratic journeys, though they were prompted by a restless and adventurous disposition, often had a serious purpose, which, perhaps, excused them in the eyes of the commander-in-chief and the authorities, from whom leave of absence from duty was neither asked nor obtained.

Even while he was only a captain, in 1868, he was off to see what could be had in the way of fighting in Spain, Queen Isabella having just made her escape. But there was nothing to be done beyond converting the journey into what used to be called a "spree," including visits to theatres, a bull-fight, and other amusements, and a hasty excursion to Tangiers, where he met with strange company. Two years afterwards he was trying to get into Paris, then invested by the Germans, and failing to make his way into the city, took a run through Russia, went to Paris on his way back, and as the commune was then uppermost was arrested and had to use all his ready address to obtain his release and admission to the city, from which he escaped and returned to England. In 1873 he lay for four months at Naples, sick with the deadly typhoid which makes that place one of the most dangerous resorts in Europe. He passed through Spain on his way home, and returned thither in the following year, where he acted as special correspondent of the *Times*, and took part in the Carlist war, but by the end of the year was on his way to Central Africa to see Gordon. He had no sooner reached this destination and shaken hands with the governor-general than a paragraph in a newspaper, stating that an order had been issued by the Russian government prohibiting foreigners from entering Central Asia, fired his ambition to reach the forbidden territory in spite of the

Muscovite and all his works. To Russian Central Asia he would go at all hazards, and after making such preparations as he thought necessary for a long and steady ride over the Russian steppes in midwinter, he started for St. Petersburg, and was soon on the way to Khiva in the midst of the severest weather ever felt. It was this ride to Khiva which made Burnaby's name known far and wide; and it so aroused the suspicion and tyranny of the Russian government that the officials whom he met, having made their report, a telegram was sent to the war office or the Horse Guards in London demanding the recal of the traveller who was away without leave. Burnaby, as we all know, reached Khiva, and would have pushed on to Bokhara and Samarcand, the very heart of Central Asia, but the telegram of recal reached him from the Duke of Cambridge, ordering his immediate return to England.

Nothing could keep him at home, and in 1876 he and his man Radford were off for a journey on horseback through Asia Minor: a ride through Asiatic Turkey to Persia and back to Constantinople along the southern shore of the Black Sea. It must have been a strange sight to those who beheld this pair of giants riding onward and onward for no other object, so far as was known, than the search for adventure and the exploration of a territory little known, but full of interest, as it touched on the Russian frontier; and including people of many nationalities from Kurds and barbarous Turcomans to Persians, Greeks, and Armenians. This journey was far less difficult than the previous one, as few obstacles were met with, the Turks rather encouraging and expediting than preventing the travellers, whom they regarded as friendly Englishmen, at a time when war between their country and Russia was already imminent.

When that war broke out in 1877 Burnaby was eager to be in the thick of it, and if possible to strike a blow against Russia. For a captain of an English regiment of guards to take his sword into a quarrel in which England had no part would have been monstrous, so he sought some other means of being on the spot, and persuaded some of his numerous friends who had organized the Stafford House Committee for sending medical and surgical aid to

the Turkish army, to appoint him as their representative in the field, to second the work of their commissioner at Constantinople. The organization was an admirable one, and the surgeons, assistant surgeons, and dressers sent out did good work in succouring about 100,000 of the sick and wounded of the Turkish army. Burnaby did his work too. He visited the hospital at Adrianople, found it in excellent working order, and reported on it, and then went to another hospital at Sofia. But he had obtained from the commissioner at Constantinople a letter to Osman Pasha, the Turkish general at Plevna, and thither, as to the probable centre of the conflict, he meant to go, that he might be in the thick of the fight; and he actually proposed to Colonel Valentine Baker, who had entered the Turkish service, to make his way across the Balkans and get through the Russian lines into Plevna. He fought by Baker's side at the battle of Tarkeshan, and soon undertook the regulation of the fifth Turkish brigade. Through the terrific cold of that winter and in the face of repeated dangers he had plenty of fighting, and appeared to be as reckless of the fact that he was not warranted in giving military aid to the Turks as he was of the obstacles and hardships that would have killed weaker men, and had already struck poor Radford with death. In the spring of 1878 the condition of Radford was an additional reason for Burnaby's return to England, where the faithful servant and brave soldier died in his master's arms almost immediately on arriving at Dover.

Burnaby then turned his attention to politics, and also proposed for the hand of Miss Hawkins-Whitshead, the daughter of Sir St. Vincent Bentinck Hawkins-Whitshead, Bart., of county Wicklow. In 1880 he contested Birmingham in the Conservative interest (for he was a pronounced Conservative), but was unsuccessful, though he and his friend Lord Randolph Churchill were the recognized Conservative candidates.

Among his cherished intentions was that of crossing the Mediterranean in a balloon, or rather an aërial ship, steered from the French coast. He had made several balloon ascents, the first as early as 1864 from Cremorne Gardens in a Montgolfier,

the property of M. Godard. In March, 1882, he went up alone in the Eclipse balloon from Dover, and actually crossed the Channel, and after a perilous voyage descended at Envermeau in Normandy. This feat was much commented on, and drew attention to his disregard of the authorities and an alleged neglect of regular military duties, so that the commander-in-chief reprimanded him in a mild way for not having asked for permission to leave the country before crossing the Channel. In 1882 he became seriously ill, and though he went to Gibraltar and there slowly recovered a fair degree of health and much of his enormous strength, he continued to suffer from weak or imperfect action of the heart. The man who seemed to have gone out to meet death face to face was now liable to die at any moment; but it made little or no difference in his restless energy, nor in his desire to be in the midst of any conflict that might be going on.

He was again interesting himself in politics when the war in the Soudan roused him to action, and he was on his way to Suakim, where, as we have seen, he joined his friend Valentine Baker, and was soon in command of a detachment. We already know that in 1884 he became attached to the intelligence department under General Graham, and was badly wounded at El-Teb by the fragment of a shell striking him in the face. This necessitated his return to England, where the report of his determined courage had preceded him. For some months he was quiet, but his wound had healed; he was growing too stout, and his heart trouble increased. He believed that he needed more active exercise, and again he was looking somewhat eagerly to Egypt, and volunteered his services to Lord Wolseley for the expedition to rescue Gordon. The authorities had apparently grown rather tired of his erratic disregard of all ordinary responsibilities towards them, and he did not obtain a nomination for service in Egypt, so he carried out his previous plan, and went without permission, leaving those who were not in the secret to suppose that he was on his way to the Transvaal. His destination was only known when he telegraphed from Korti, and he then left that place to follow General Stewart with a

convoy of grain, and, as we have seen, fell in the midst of the enemy, fighting to the last. Upon the news of his death reaching her Majesty at Osborne Sir Henry Ponsonby telegraphed to Mrs. Burnaby:—"The Queen, who hears with deep regret the news of the death of Col. Burnaby, has commanded me to inquire after Mrs. Burnaby." That lady was then in Switzerland, where she had been obliged to pass the winter because of her delicate health, and the royal message was forwarded to her there.

The names of other officers of distinction and of military promise were in the list of the killed in that battle with a horde of barbarians. Major Wilfrid Arbuthnot Gough of the 1st (Royal) Dragoons had served with the military police in 1882, and had been present at the battle of Tel-el-Kebir and at the occupation of Cairo, where he received a medal and clasp, the fifth class of the Medjidie, and the khedive's medal. Altogether he had seen fifteen years' service. Major Walter Hyde Atherton of the 5th (Princess Charlotte of Wales) Dragoon Guards had taken the rank of major in a little over nine years, as he had entered the army in 1874. Major Ludovick Montefiore Carmichael of the 5th (Royal Irish) Lancers had entered in 1881 and obtained his majority in 1884. Captain Joseph Watkins William Darley of the 4th (Royal Irish) Dragoon Guards, entered as lieutenant in 1874, and became captain in 1881. He had served with his regiment in Egypt in 1882, and was in the battles of Kassassin and Tel-el-Kebir, and at the occupation of Cairo, for which services he received the medal with clasp and the khedive's star. Lieutenant Richard Wolfe, first on the list of lieutenants in the Royal Scots Greys (2d Dragoons), had seen seven years' service. Lieutenant Charles W. A. Law, of the 4th Dragoons (Royal Irish), had only received his commission in July, 1882. Lieutenant Alfred Pigott, of the Naval Brigade, had begun his career in 1861 as a cadet, was made sub-lieutenant in 1867, and lieutenant in 1872. Lord St. Vincent, of the 16th Lancers, who, as we have noted, was severely wounded and had to be placed on a baggage-camel, died soon afterwards of his injuries; and Lieutenant James Dunbar Guthrie of the Royal Horse Artillery shared the same fate. They were

taken to Abu-Klea and left there with the rest of the wounded under a strong guard when the main column marched on to the Nile. Admiral Jervis, who gained his peerage by winning the battle of St. Vincent in 1797, was created Baron Jervis, Earl, and afterwards Viscount St. Vincent. When he died, without issue, in 1823 the barony and earldom expired, but the viscountcy devolved by remainder on his nephew, the grandfather of John Edward Leveson Jervis, the officer who received his death-wound at Abu-Klea. He had succeeded to the title as fourth viscount on the death of his father in July, 1879, served in the Zulu War of 1879 as orderly officer to Major-general Marshall, and was present with the 17th Lancers in the engagements at the Zuinguin Mountain and Ulundi, for which service he obtained the medal and clasp. He also served as orderly officer to Brigadier-general MacGregor in the expedition against the Marrees in Southern Afghanistan in 1880, and in the Boer war of 1881 as adjutant of Barrow's Mounted Infantry. In 1882 he took part in the Egyptian campaign as aide-de-camp to Major-general Drury Lowe, commanding the cavalry division, and he was present at the battle of Tel-el-Kebir and the capture of Cairo. Lieutenant James Dunbar Guthrie, of the B Brigade of the Royal Horse Artillery, entered the service from the Royal Academy on January 25, 1877. This was his first campaign.

Yes, the list of the killed and wounded among what was comparatively a handful of men was distressing; but the situation made it imperative that if that small force was to accomplish its work, to reach Metammeh to communicate with Gordon at Khartûm and to await the arrival of the Nile column, and the commander-in-chief and his reserves from Korti, they must push on and occupy a position on the Nile bank. It was some time before the loss in men and camels could be realized. Boxes of ammunition, for which there were no camels, and the rifles of the killed and wounded men, were found upon the field. Much ammunition had been burned, many rifles broken, the fire from the burning cartridges catching the pack saddles of the dead or wounded camels and smouldering and fizzling in a horrible way. It was

weary work to collect the spears, banners, and swords left on the field by the enemy, and our men were surprised at not finding any shields such as had been used by the tribes who fought at El Teb. The Arabs had fled precipitately, leaving behind them nearly all that they possessed, which, however, did not appear to amount to much, the most valuable of the effects being a number of donkeys and several skins full of water, which were at once sent up to the wounded in the square. There was but little "loot" beyond the arms, and a few scattered garments, rugs, prayer-carpets, and ordinary camp utensils, nor would there have been much time to appropriate it if there had been, for our men were suffering agonies of thirst, and as the square moved slowly on were wondering whether the hussars, who had ridden forward on their weak, starved, and perishing horses, would find the wells before dark, or whether there would be orders to return to the seriba for the night. Soon a hussar was seen urging on his horse to bring the welcome tidings that Barrow had occupied the place without opposition, and a fresh effort was made to push on towards the so-called wells—really a series of pits in the sand of the valley bed with little basins at the bottom into which the water trickled. But that water was life and strength, and the hussars had enough to do to manage their horses, who were wild at the sight and smell of it, and had to be controlled when they were suffered to go down in turn and drink. As the square approached, wells were told off to the different regiments. It may be imagined how eager the poor fellows were for a deep and unmeasured draught after their battle and their long march in the sun; but they behaved admirably, and there was no difficulty in keeping the best well clear for the supply of drink to the sick and wounded in the hospital. The water was muddy, but cool and sweet. There was little or nothing to be got to eat, except where any of the men had pocketed a few bits of biscuit. The order was given to bivouac in square. The hussars had brought in a couple of wounded Arabs, and letters and papers found on the bodies of others of the enemy had to be examined by Colonel Wilson—a duty which could only be performed before

night set in. Soon after sunset a detachment was sent back to the seriba to bring in the camels with the commissariat stores, but they would not return till morning, and as the blankets, great-coats, and coverings were all with the baggage at the seriba and the night was bitterly cold, there was not much sleep to be got except by those who were exceptionally hardy or who contrived to get between two camels and cover themselves with the baggage nets. The detachment sent to the seriba had no sleep at all, for they had to work hard all night to get the stores together from the places where they had been used as parapets, then to load up the camels, and to get away with the whole contents and accompanied by the occupants of the seriba, which had not been attacked. At about seven in the morning they were seen approaching, much to the delight of the men, who now had rations served out to them, and were able to get their first square meal since noon of the 16th, and this was ten o'clock in the morning of the 18th. A burying party was then told off to return to the field of battle and bury our dead. A staff-officer counted 1100 bodies of the enemy on the ground round the place which had been occupied by the square. It was estimated from reports received that about 12,000 of the Arabs were engaged, though only about 5000 made the actual charge. The bodies of sixty of our men were buried at about the spot where the square was attacked, and where it was reported that a gunner named Smith had gallantly defended Lieutenant Guthrie. At the moment when the other gunners had been borne back with the rush he had kept back his assailants with a handspike, which perhaps, as it did not twist and could not "jam," was as good a weapon as some others used on the occasion.

Four prisoners who had surrendered had been brought in by the convoy coming from the seriba. They were blacks who had been in Hicks's army, and whom the Arabs had compelled to fight us. One of these was a sergeant and spoke in very fair Italian. The information elicited from them was that the enemy had consisted of Arabs and regulars from Berber; Arabs from Kordofan, some of the Mahdi's troops from Omdurman, men levied in the

district of Metammeh, and Jalin and Awadiyeh Arabs from the surrounding country, in all 9000 to 11,000 men. The enemy's sharpshooters were black soldiers of Hicks's army, and of the garrisons of Obeid and Bara, which had surrendered to the Mahdi. There were also a few hunters from Kordofan. The charge on the square had been made by Duguaim, Kenana, and Hamra Arabs from Kordofan, and this portion of the force, with their sheikhs and emirs, had been almost destroyed. The men of Jalin and Metammeh were in reserve, and the cavalry scouts were the Awadiyeh. Omdurman had fallen about a fortnight before, and thus a large number of the Mahdi's troops were set free, though the force which had been defeated at Abu-Klea was but the advanced guard of a large army which it was expected had already reached Metammeh.

Some of the papers found on the field were important and interesting. There was a copy of a set of prayers supposed to be composed by the Mahdi. These were being read by the sheikh Musa when he broke into the square. There were letters from the Mahdi to chiefs and governors (among them one to the governor of Shendy), exhorting them to fight the infidels; among them was a letter from the Emir of Berber, Muhammed El Kheir, to one Sheikh Muhammed Zein saying: "It behoves you to get ready with energy and activity, and to carry on the holy war against the enemies of the faith, and to fight against the heathen and the believers in more than one God. You must be patient and steadfast and make raids. As our beloved, the Emir Sad Salim, has asked you for reinforcements and sought your aid for victory, therefore give him reinforcements and help him to victory. Go to him with all the men of your emirate. God Almighty has said, 'If they (the believers) seek your aid to ensure the victory of the faith, it is your duty to aid them;' and the Prophet, on whom be peace and blessings, has said, 'The believers are like a building, one part strengthens the other.' Therefore, on receipt of this letter, proceed with all your followers to the Emir Sad Salim, and do not wait for your ammunition, for you are not to fight with the enemies of God with ammunition, but with spears and swords.

Take, therefore, the equipment you have with you and proceed to your brother the Emir Sad Salim at once and without delay. This day all the emirs, the allies, and agents have been instructed by letter to move over to the western side of the Nile. Peace!"

This letter, signed Muhammed El Kheir, was dated "18th Rabia el Awwal, which represents the 4th of January (1885), and it had the following postscript:—"Warn all your followers to take their water-skins, their leathern sacks, and food for the road: for if you meet the enemies of God it will be in the desert and not in houses. Every one must take his travelling equipment. This is the time to sacrifice wealth and life in the cause of God. You must obey the command of the Almighty, and fight the good fight of the sacrifice of your wealth and your lives. Be of good cheer, great victory and much plenty await you, for God has promised it to you, oh ye congregations of believing Moslems."

Colonel Sir Charles Wilson, in his interesting account of the march to Metammeh, says: that from this letter it is evident that the concentration of the large body of Arabs to oppose the column at Abu-Klea took place after Stewart's occupation of Gakdul, and that if the general had gone straight across, as was at one time intended, he would have met with no opposition in the desert and probably not much at Metammeh. The original plan had to be given up for want of transport. Another thousand camels, which might have been obtained in November, would have enabled the troops to follow Gordon's directions, "Come by way of Metammeh, or Berber, only by these two roads. Do this without letting rumours of your approach spread abroad." The occupation of Gakdul had made known to the enemy that the column was moving on the route to Metammeh. Stewart's first march was a surprise. The Arabs did not know of it till the morning he started; and Omdurman not having then fallen, the Mahdi could not have sent down so many troops even if he had had time to do so.

That he had made a general levy for the purpose of sending a large force seems to have been shown by the fact that many of the Arabs who fell fighting with spear and sword only were mere

lads of sixteen or seventeen. Among the letters found on the field were some relating to dissensions among the Mahdi's followers; but judging from the bearing and declarations of the two prisoners who had been brought in, the belief in his authority and in his eventual victory over us was unbroken.

If anything were to be done there was not an hour to lose. The chief question was whether it would be better to make a night march, fatigued as the men were, and to push on at once for the Nile, which might be reached by daylight next morning; or to camp at night at the wells at Shebacat or elsewhere on the route, and start fresh after breakfast. On this point opinions were divided, Sir Charles Wilson advocating the latter plan, while Sir Herbert Stewart, who was in chief command, preferred the former, as notwithstanding their want of rest the men were in good spirits and could march the twenty-five miles to the Nile and still have time for a good rest before they would be called upon to fight.

The march was to be along the Metammeh road, past the Shebacat wells, and to within a few miles of Metammeh, when a turn was to be made to the right that the column might reach the river about three miles above the town. If this could be effected before daybreak the town might be attacked after the men had rested and had breakfast. But the difficulties of the night march had not been fully estimated. The ordinary guides could not lead the way, and the only man able to act as guide was Ali Loda, the robber who had been taken in the desert, and who declared, not untruly, that he knew the country well, that there was one part of the journey where there were many trees which would make the way difficult to traverse on a moonless night. However, the promise of a reward and the intimation that he must go, sufficed to induce him, and at half-past three in the afternoon of the 18th of January the march commenced, the hussars going in front, the guards next, and then the convoy heavies and mounted-infantry. While the route lay down the valley and over a mountain spur with a view over the plain reaching to the Nile all went fairly well, and only an occasional halt was made; but when the sun had set and the level road,

which could be seen by starlight, was succeeded by a rough broken track, full of ruts and tall clinging grass, the starving camels wanted to stop to feed, and were so weak that they began to stumble and stagger about. The men had to halt to permit the baggage camels to close up. For about two hours this continued, and then the way was amidst a thicket of thorny acacias, between which only narrow tracks permitted the troops to pass. Here the confusion was terrible on account of the darkness, and more than once the sudden appearance of the rear-guard in front of the column made it seem as though the march had been in a circle. The cavalry got through pretty well, but the guards, who had been dismounted in case of an attack, had some difficulty, and the baggage camels were so jammed and entangled in the thick scrub that some were left behind and others were only released with considerable difficulty. There were frequent halts, and men and beasts were weary, hungry, and faint for want of water. On reaching open ground again a halt was called. Ali Loda said that they then would have only a straight march to Metammeh, and Sir Herbert Stewart determined to endeavour to reach the Nile without fighting, and to engage the enemy only when our men had the river at their backs and could make sure of water. At about one o'clock in the morning it was calculated that the point (about fifteen miles) at which they were to turn off in order to strike the river bank had been reached. Ali Loda was questioned, and was still confident, though the night was dark and there were now no tracks to go by. A "bearing" was taken from the map, and the guide, who was really doing his work well, was told to take them clear and out of sight of Metammeh. The country was pretty fair for travelling, though there were scattered trees and no path was visible; but the terrible journey through the maze of mimosa scrub had so completely disorganized the column, and men and animals were so worn out with fatigue that it was exceedingly difficult to make even slow progress, and all was in confusion. Camel-drivers having fallen asleep the laden brutes got loose and went stumbling on in the darkness, passing the advanced hussars and even the guides,

so that the column seemed to be led by a struggling crowd of men and riderless camels, which kept on and on and could not be driven back. The moment the halt was sounded men lay down to try to snatch a few minutes' sleep even amidst the groans of the beasts and the moans of their drivers, which rose, so Colonel Wilson tells us, in one continuous roar, which must have been heard at Metammeh, and probably gave the enemy the first notice of the approach of our men.

As Sir Herbert Stewart desired to reach the Nile without being seen he had perhaps better have left the guide to take them in the way which he was going, though it was thought that it would have led to a point too far from the town, and the plan had been to arrive at a place not more than three miles distant. Progress was slow—not more than a mile an hour; and half an hour before daylight a halt was called that they might see where they were and to give time for the rear to close up.

They could not at anyrate reach the Nile before daylight, and so the guide was ordered to take the shortest way that they might arrive without being discovered by the enemy. He was accordingly placed under a cavalry escort and turned in another direction. The Nile was then about six miles distant, and after another two miles of slow and wearisome marching the advanced men came upon some herds of goats, which were quickly appropriated and supplied the lucky fellows in front with a draught of milk apiece. The officer sent forward to reconnoitre reported that he had seen Metammeh, heard the beating of the tomtoms, and observed the troops there in regular formation moving over the gravel ridge on which the town was built. It was now of little use trying to avoid being seen, and on mounting a ridge our men could see the valley beneath, a wide belt of vegetation with the river running through it, a number of large regularly built villages, a large town about four miles to the left in front, and another smaller town on the other side—the former Metammeh, the latter Shendy. Numbers of the enemy were moving down from the town, some coming straight towards our column or our hussars, who had moved forward as far as

it was prudent for their tired horses to advance; others were coming along the river bank to intercept us, and it seemed that they were stretching out right and left, and would attempt to close round our rear, while the din of the tomtoms could now be heard on all sides. It was now about seven o'clock, and Sir Herbert Stewart, seeing that our men would have to fight their way to the river, determined to halt and let them breakfast, then close up the transport and march for the river bank, with the fighting men going between the transport and the town. Preparations were made for forming a seriba on an open space of gravelly ground, where all the baggage camels were packed close together in the centre, the riding camels round them, and the troops forming an irregular oblong outside all. The seriba was formed of boxes, sacks, camel saddles, barrels, brushwood, and sand. The men and the officers worked with a will notwithstanding the previous night's exhausting duty. One officer, who had been in the hot corner at Abu-Klea, had been on arduous duty ever since, and had had no sleep and little food or drink for forty-eight hours. During the time that the seriba was being formed the enemy's sharpshooters began firing with their Remingtons from the surrounding tall grass and clumps of bushes, and the exposed situation of the place, chosen that it might not be suddenly attacked, caused the position of our men to be far from pleasant. The seriba could not be "rushed" by a charge of the Arabs, but there was so much cover from which the enemy could fire that it was not safe to leave the shelter of the boxes and saddles. Great numbers of camels were shot, and the centre, where the field-hospital had been formed, was, so to speak, in the midst of a pattering hail of bullets from the sharpshooters, who were so concealed that their position could only be descried by the puffs of smoke. There could be but little opportunity of breakfasting in any sense beyond that of hastily partaking of much-needed food—and neither rations nor water were plentiful. Probably many of the men got little or nothing, and many were so exhausted that directly they crouched or lay down in the shelter of the breastwork it was as much as the officers

could do to keep them awake. Yet as the attack grew hotter the parapet in front of the men was built higher, and in some places boxes were so piled as to intercept the slanting fire, while a few men were sent out to occupy a knoll which might otherwise have been taken advantage of by the enemy. Thirty brave guardsmen volunteered for this duty, and each carried something to form a breastwork, so that a post was established there.

Inside the principal intrenchment, or seriba, men were falling, and at a little after ten in the morning Sir Herbert Stewart, who was passing round to see whether the men were getting breakfast, was struck by a bullet just above the groin, and so seriously wounded that he had to be immediately carried to the hospital, where the surgical staff, in spite of their fatigue and the continued demand made upon their exertions, were doing their duty with a noble courage and devotion.

Almost at the same time that the general was struck Mr. Cameron, the war correspondent of the *Standard*, was mortally wounded in the back, and soon afterwards Mr. St. Leger Herbert of the *Morning Post* was shot dead, and Mr. Burleigh of the *Daily Telegraph* was wounded but not severely. He was one of the first of the volunteers to carry the boxes, &c., to form the breastwork to protect the men who were to occupy the knoll already mentioned, and it was a troublesome job, as the journey was for about forty yards under fire. Afterwards, when the party of the 2nd Life Guards and Greys under the command of Lord Cochrane were sent to build up the breastwork so that it was converted into a redoubt, the work was done under a still warmer fire in which officers and men with some of the sappers were actively working. The construction of another redoubt to protect the hospital was nearly as dangerous, for bullets were flying about from all directions, while boxes had to be carried inward from the redoubt which had been made in front of the seriba. There was great difficulty in getting about among the camels, and it was some time before the men who were to form the square for the advance could muster after leaving the redoubts so far completed as to be finished by the

garrison who would stay behind to protect them. During this time about five-and-twenty men were killed, and it was quite early during the confusion that Cameron was shot in the back as he rose from the place where he had seated himself near his camels and reached his hand for a box of sardines which his servant had brought for him. St. Leger Herbert, a delightful companion and highly accomplished man, a great friend both of General Stewart and Colonel Wilson, had gone with the wounded general to the hospital, where he assisted the aide-de-camp to attend to him. He had been writing at Stewart's dictation and had just come back to fetch his water-bottle before joining the square when he was killed on the spot.

Cameron had had a presentiment of death during the previous night march and was strangely solemn and foreboding: a very different thing from being afraid, for probably few men knew less of fear. He was held in high regard by officers and men as well as by his colleagues; and he had been through greater perils than most of those who were his companions in Egypt. Few of his friends who met him at the Savage Club in London (the writer of these lines among them) just before his departure for the Soudan thought that he was going on his last campaign. His description of the journey of the desert column from Korti to Abu-Kru was not received at the office of the *Standard* in London till after his death; and there seems to be in it a strange sense of impending trouble. This letter is characteristic of the style of one of the ablest of war correspondents.

"General Stewart's previous march to Gakdul and back was more of the nature of a successful reconnaissance made in search of water. We were now in grim earnest bound on a dash straight across, to plunge unsupported into the heart of the enemy's country, and amidst a population all of them avowed disciples of the Crescentade against infidels everywhere, inaugurated by Mahomed Achmet, the Mahdi of the Soudan. No wonder that the natives who watched looked upon us as men doomed to destruction, for had not three large armies more numerous than ours, and as well equipped, already passed over the same road,

bound on a similar errand to ours, and had they not all perished to a man? But what the natives did not realize, although some among them were beginning to have a glimmering of the fact, was that these great white soldiers, although they did not bully and kick and tyrannize over them, were still a very different kind of fighting material to the white-livered, despicable Egyptian and murdering Bashi-Bazouk, to whom they had hitherto been accustomed. Only Greeks, Copts, and blacks—chiefly runaway slaves—would accompany us as servants; and here I may refer once more to the wonderful care and forethought that has characterized the preparations for this expedition. In sending for Somaulies to Aden to act as camel-drivers, Lord Wolseley must be given credit for wonderful prescience. Had he depended upon Egyptians or Dongalese, we should now be in serious difficulty, for not even the courbash, did we care to use it, would induce these people to go on. True, a detachment of Egyptian soldiers are doing convoy work as camel-drivers; but these for some time have been under English officers, and even they have not behaved well when thirst and fatigue has had to be endured. The private individual who may essay to accompany our army while campaigning in the East must be prepared to face many crushing disasters and heartbreaking disappointments so far as his personal transport and commissariat arrangements are concerned. Troops depend for these matters on their regimental organization, and so are able without anxiety to devote to their proper duties their entire energies. Not so the press correspondent; and thus, when five miles out in the desert we overtook the column, our horror and dismay may be referred to, but cannot be imagined, at discovering that our baggage and water camels were not with the others, as they ought to have been. There was nothing for it but to canter back, search for and find the missing men and animals, and endeavour to overtake the column again at its encampment for the night. We should have lost our way had not the camp-fires that the men lit after dark served as beacons to guide us over the plain. In the desert, water is the great thing. Food we can do without for a period, and not suffer much, but never water.

And so the first thing to do on halting was to examine the skins that contained our precious supply; and then by the friendly bivouac of the mounted infantry detachment on rear-guard, we lay on the sand to try and snatch some sleep ere the bugles sounded. For the waning moon would rise at half-past one, and at that hour General Stewart had ordered the start to be made. Apparently the last fire to remain alight had only flickered out and silence had but reigned for a few minutes, when the beautiful but weirdlike *réveille* of the British army startled us unwillingly into life again. Once or twice only during my campaigning experiences have I heard the *réveille* sound with feelings of satisfaction. The last occasion was the morning of the battle of Tamai. All night we had lain silent while the enemy cracked volleys of musketry into us from the bush outside our zereebah. But with the first note of the *réveille* we sprang to our feet as one man, glad all of us to think that now our turn had come. And before the bugles ceased the Arabs, too, had stopped their firing and retired to the ambush from which they subsequently sprang upon us. With very different disposition do we listen here in the desert to the morning call; for it is the signal to jump up with unwilling energy and load our moaning camels, and prepare to jog on again wearily in the dark. To load a camel properly, even in daylight, is a work of art. The cargo must be balanced exactly, one half on either side of his back, otherwise it will inevitably, sooner or later, tumble off, and there is nothing more heartbreaking than to see one's baggage tumble off on the line of march—particularly when in an enemy's country. The last rope had hardly been fastened when the 'fall in' sounded, and then for an hour men and camels grouped into their places in the dark; and at half-past two we moved off our ground, the pebble-strewed desert glistening in the dim moonlight as if it were covered with a coat of yellow shining varnish. Frequently would the bugles sound the halt in rear, to allow time for stragglers to close up, for the officer commanding the rearguard had the usual orders to leave nothing behind. With him were the spare camels, and if a loaded one tumbled, or lay down to die, as they

frequently did, a fresh beast at once took his place, and so wearily until morning we silently marched—few cared to converse—gliding across the desert like one long shadow. At half-past five what looked like the reflection of a huge conflagration appeared on the horizon. It signalled the approach of day; and when it was light the bugles sounded a merry march, the men shouted and talked cheerily, and even the camels looked mildly contented. At ten we halted for breakfast, and tried to get a little sleep until two, when we were away again, striding on sometimes across stretches of sand, sometimes over stony ground, and anon through mimosa country; but ever the sun shone fiercely overhead. A peculiarity of the deserts that border the Nile is that the mouths of men and beasts who traverse them are always parched. Those who have experience know that it is no use to drink continuously. That only increases the torture, but it is difficult to resist the temptation, and so the men of the Sussex regiment, unlike their comrades of the heavies and mounted infantry who had marched up from Wady Halfa, drank on unceasingly and surreptitiously at their water-skins. In vain the officers restrained them, and when the march at last came to an end for the day it was discovered also that so had almost the water, while seventy miles had yet to be traversed before a plentiful supply could be obtained.

The skins, too, served out to the heavies had leaked; in short there was scarcity of water with all. Lucky was he who, having ventured to bring with him a horse, could give that horse a drink; and never shall I forget the blank look of despair with which one journalist announced that he 'had no water for his horse and none for himself.' But it was not always the skins that had leaked; sometimes, too, had the honesty of the servants in charge, for soldiers were foraging about offering any price, even a dollar, for as much as would make a single drink.

Again, early in the morning, we started, but there was now no unwillingness to get on; for with many delay meant torture—perhaps death—while progress meant water and life. The wells of Hambok, forty-seven miles out from Korti, were found empty. Only a bucketful of the precious fluid was there, and that was given to a

couple of horses that otherwise would have died. The column did not even halt at Hambok, but pushed on to El Howeyet, eight miles further, where a better supply was expected. But there, too, ill-luck awaited us. The convoy that started from Korti the day before had only left El Howeyet half an hour previous to our arrival—so quickly had we travelled—and they had drunk all the water. But we halted at El Howeyet until evening, and by that time enough water—if that name may be given to a fluid of the colour and consistency of pea-soup—had accumulated to allow every man to have a slight drink. So wild were some of the soldiers with thirst, that for some time it seemed as if a tumult might set in; but Major Wardroper ordered all to fall in as they stood, and so one by one, and in order, were they supplied with their share. On again we went until dark, the camels striding at their quickest pace, as anxious as their riders that water in plenty should be reached; and on again in the morning too we went, making for the wells of Abu Halfa, which, although some distance off the main track, were eight or ten miles nearer than Gakdul. There the guides assured us would water be found in plenty. In front the squadron of the 19th Hussars pushed on, for the horses had only drunk a quart a piece during the previous twenty-four hours. They were much distressed, of course, and, if not watered that day, would many of them assuredly die. At first the well of Abu Halfa looked anything but promising. A shallow pool of water, green on the top, we saw, which was well-nigh emptied before even the horses had satisfied their thirst. But then a clear, bubbling spring, was discovered at the bottom, which, when cleared, afforded sufficient for everybody; only the wretched camels went without. For a period the scene at the Abu Halfa well was exciting in the extreme. Chattering Somaulies, wild with thirst, barred from the main pool until the fighting men had drunk their full, grubbed frantically in the sand, and in an inconceivably short period dug holes, at the bottom of which a little water collected, that was promptly lapped up. The soldiers, too, could hardly be restrained from throwing discipline aside and thronged in on all sides, while in the background were plunging horses and camels

broken loose and fighting desperately with their human masters for a place. Yesterday at noon we reached Gakdul, and until to-day have been busy watering our exhausted animals and preparing ourselves for the march to Metammeh, which begins to-morrow. What the result of that march may be the wires will have told ere this letter reaches England. At present we know not whether our road is to be barred by thousands, or whether we shall reach the Nile without firing a shot. In camp parlance it is 'even betting' on either contingency. We only know that if we fight at all it will not be for victory, but for very existence; for behind us there will be no retreat."

Mr. Cameron, though he possessed in a pre-eminent degree the qualifications necessary for a war correspondent, and was admired and respected not only by his literary colleagues but by the officers and men of the service, had not received any special training as a journalist. He had a remarkable faculty for condensed and yet picturesque description; and though he did not appear to be exceptionally powerful of physique, his tireless energy and fearless daring, united to a quiet and almost self-depreciatory manner, and a constant determination that the paper which he represented should receive all the intelligence that could possibly be forwarded from the scene of action, gave him considerable influence, and on several occasions had enabled him to get information "through," when some other correspondents were less fortunate either because of obstacles at head-quarters or difficulties of transport which required unusual exertion, courage, and address. He had been engaged during six years in the service of the *Standard* in various parts of the world, and had performed feats of daring which made him famous among his companions, who regarded him no less for his cheery courage than for his geniality and kindness. Mr. Cameron had gone out to India at a comparatively early age and was there engaged in mercantile business, which he relinquished on the outbreak of the Afghan war, when he obtained the post of special correspondent for the *Bombay Gazette.* The excellence of his descriptive letters soon attracted so much attention that in the following year, when the advance of Ayoub Khan and the British

defeat at Maiwand caused a renewal of the war, his offer to become special correspondent for the *Standard* was accepted, and he was directed to join the column which, under General Phayre, was preparing to march to the relief of Candahar. Seven days after leaving Bombay he reached Quettah, for he travelled night and day, and rode up the Bolan Pass from Sibi in thirty-six hours. He was the first to ride with the news of General Roberts' victory to the nearest telegraph post, which he reached a day and a half before his competitors and the government couriers, and was back at Candahar in time to accompany the first party which went out to the battle-field of Maiwand, whence he sent home a description of the scene and of the fighting which established his reputation for literary ability as well as for enterprise.

Not long after his return to Bombay the Boer insurrection broke out, and he at once crossed to Natal, where he arrived before any of the correspondents sent from England could reach the spot. He was present at the battles of Laing's Nek, Ingogo, and the calamitous fight at Majuba Hill, where he was knocked down and taken prisoner by the Boers, but on the following day contrived to send off a message with a famous description of the battle. He returned to England on the conclusion of the war, but directly news arrived of the riots in Alexandria he set out for Egypt and was on board the admiral's flag-ship *Invincible* at the bombardment of Alexandria, continuing with the British forces, witnessing and describing every engagement until the occupation of Cairo. Cameron was one of those men who get tired of what to most people would seem absolutely needful rest, and never seemed quite to realize the energy and ability with which he did his work. In reply to expressions recognizing his success, he would say, "I did my best," and so far from assuming any merit he frequently appeared to be under the impression that he might have given greater satisfaction. At anyrate he was eager for work, and left Cairo for Madagascar, where he soon perceived, and in a series of excellent letters described, the state of affairs consequent on French interference. It was uncertain, however, whether there would be any fighting, and he therefore crossed the Pacific to Melbourne,

and thence made his way to Tonquin, where hostilities had just commenced between the French and the natives. He was present at the engagement in which the former failed to carry the defences erected by the "black flags," but as no English correspondents were allowed to remain with the French forces he started on his way home. Osman Digma's forces were then threatening Suakim, and Mr. Cameron, on reaching Suez, set out for the scene of conflict, and was in time to take part in the attempt of Baker Pasha's force against the rebels. He then had a very narrow escape from being killed, but remained at Suakim till the arrival of General Graham's expedition, and accompanied it to Tokar on to the battles of El-Teb and Tamanieb. He then returned to England, but in a few weeks was again on the way to Egypt to go up the Nile with the first boats of Lord Wolseley's expedition, to one or two brief extracts from some of the letters describing which we have already given attention. Well might the *Standard* say in concluding a notice of his untimely death:—"The Arab bullet which ended his brilliant yet still promising career has carried away the foremost of the little band of correspondents who daily risk their lives for the public good; it has also deprived this journal of one of the most earnest, indefatigable, and unselfish of workers, and his friends of a most genial, lovable, and kindly comrade."

One of these friends and fellow war correspondents, writing of him, says—"In camp he was independent in demeanour without any bluster, mindful of the interests of his paper without meanly trying to overreach others, sagacious without cunning. His stern face, deep voice, and vigorous bearing made him distinguished among his fellow-correspondents, while his fearless honesty, his frank confession of others' successes, his hatred of swagger and underhandedness, gained him the respect of all competitors. In times of war the 'special,' let him be never so well recommended individually to the chiefs in command, never so popular personally, finds that he has to assert himself, and often with unmistakable emphasis, if he wishes to see the interests of his paper properly respected and served: and Cameron was never backward in putting his foot down if occasion required. But the judgment which

characterized him made him respected everywhere; and if at any special juncture a selection of pressmen had to be made, he was certain to be among the chosen few, while the fact that as a rule he stood upon his rights on points affecting the general welfare rather than his own individual advantage, constituted him after a fashion a champion of the rest. . . . On the march I have seen a good deal of him. We went together from Quetta to Candahar with Biddulph's column. It was, if I remember right, his first essay in war correspondence, and bade fair to be his last, for he was overtaken by fever and travelled more like an invalid than a soldier. Sartorius 'of the Beluchis' proved then a friend indeed, and as in addition to every other talent that able officer is an excellent cook, I have often sat on the shingles on Afghan hillsides and among the boulders in some dry stream bed—as a rule the 'roads' of the country—and in the humble capacity of scullery-maid to Sartorius's cook helped to prepare a warm mess of milk and oatmeal or corn-flour for our sick companion. There was one day a rather special 'alarm' sounded. The enemy had really been seen this time. Somebody even said that firing was reported. 'Now don't you get off your doolie (or stretcher) till I send to you,' said Sartorius to Cameron as he hurried off himself to see if his company were falling in properly. But no sooner was the invalid quite certain that his nurse was out of sight than out he crept from under the curtains of the doolie, and dragging himself on all-fours up to an eminence, set himself down there revolver in hand, and there an hour later I found him, looking so ill and spectral that I remember thinking he would never get better. When Sartorius came back he 'wigged' him, to which all that Cameron said was, 'Do you think I came here to sit inside a doolie when there's shooting and all kinds of larks going on?'"

Speaking of their having again met in Egypt the same correspondent says, "I had gone out to the Ramleh fortifications, and was trying to pass without attracting our sentry's attention up to a point whence I thought a short stalk might give me a glimpse of the enemy's outposts. Under a giant fig-tree, heavily laden with black fruit, I suddenly encountered Cameron. We exchanged the

usual 'hullo' of friends meeting unexpectedly, and then he said, 'Where are you going?' 'To those palm-trees along that bank, if I could,' I replied. 'Can't,' said Cameron. 'I have been waiting here an hour to see if that blessed sentry of ours will go away, but he won't; and he says that if I try to go over the ditch he'll shoot at me. Those are his orders. But I don't mind having a try all the same,' he added. The sentry, however, was a veritable lynx, and eventually we had to content ourselves with figs and conversation on the spot where we had met. And the memory is still fresh in my mind of the friendliness with which Cameron, who had been in Alexandria from the first, put me as a new-comer through the whole business and posted me up to date. . . . In action he kept his head admirably cool, saw more than most of his competitors, and in his arrangements for getting his despatches back to the telegraph-box always showed a remarkable sagacity. I remember his cheery 'good morning' as he rode past me where I stood writing a telegram on my saddle on the field at Tel-el-Kebir, and after the fight we sat and rested together in one of Arabi's tents. Together we went to Lord Wolseley, where he stood on the bridge eating grapes out of his helmet, and asked him about the chance of our specials getting through, Herbert Stewart, and I think Major Gough coming up to join in the conversation about the fight that ensued. We travelled together to Cairo, and then parted, I coming straight home, he remaining."

This account of the duties, the dangers, and the responsibilities of those special correspondents to whom reference has been made will not be out of place in the story of England's intervention in Egypt; for the special war correspondent has become a recognized representative of the public desire to learn all that may be safely made known of the progress and achievements of any conflict in which the British arms may be engaged, and no account of modern warfare would be complete, it might almost be said that no popular and unbiassed account of a modern campaign would be possible, without his aid. It should be remembered, too, that many, if not most, of the special war correspondents have taken active

part in military service, either as commissioned officers or as holding a temporary appointment as recognized attachés; and Mr. Cameron's knowledge of and familiarity with military subjects was considerable.

Mr. St. Leger Herbert was really a distinguished public servant, and his brilliant talents and the offices which he had held gave him a position of peculiar influence, to which his remarkable social qualities added the sincere regard of all who knew him. He was a member of that branch of the distinguished Herbert family, of which Lord Carnarvon is the head. His grandfather, William Herbert, Dean of Manchester, was the third son of the first Earl of Carnarvon, and the dean's second son, Captain Frederick Charles Herbert, was the father of St. Leger Algernon by his marriage with the youngest daughter of the late Captain Henry Stuart, of the 39th Regiment. Mr. St. Leger Herbert was in his thirty-fifth year, having been born on the 16th of August, 1850. Although so young he had seen great and varied service, and distinguished himself on many occasions. He was a scholar of Wadham College, and obtained a first class at the Oxford Moderations. His first public appointment was with Lord Dufferin, when that nobleman was governor-general of the Dominion of Canada. He afterwards acted as private secretary to Lord Wolseley (then Sir Garnet Wolseley) on the occasion of the annexation of Cyprus, and was also civil secretary to Sir Garnet when he proceeded to South Africa as high commissioner. For his services on these occasions Mr. Herbert was made a commander of St. Michael and St. George. He was present at the taking of Sekukuni's mountain, for which he obtained the South African medal. Mr. Herbert was also civil secretary to Sir Frederick Roberts in South Africa, and when that general returned to England he was made secretary to the Transvaal commission. He served with the mounted infantry at Tel-el-Kebir as a volunteer, for which he obtained the Egyptian medal. He was present two years later at the engagements of El-Teb and Tamasi, where he acted as galloper to Sir H. Stewart, and obtained the clasp. At Tamasi he received a severe wound, but

his youth and good constitution enabled him quickly to recover from it and to go to Korti as a special correspondent that he might join the desert column, which at the moment of his death—its commander seriously wounded, its men falling under the fire of the enemy then closing round it—was again forming in square, a small, but fearless, body of grimly earnest men, determined to fight their way to the Nile or die in the attempt.

In England it was considered probable that General Stewart's plan would be, if he found the Arabs in force in an intrenched position at Metammeh, to abstain from attacking them, and to form a fortified camp on the banks of the Nile a short distance lower down the river, a position which he would probably be able to hold against the attacks of any number of the enemy. General Graham, who had returned from Suakim to London, wrote a letter to the *Standard*, dated the 26th of January, in which he said:—

"At a time when all minds are anxiously straining for any intelligence from the gallant little band under General Stewart, the following suggestion may, in default of any certainty, tend somewhat to alleviate our fears. Should General Stewart on approaching Metammeh have found the rebels strongly intrenched, he may have wisely declined attacking, but leaving them on his left, have struck the Nile, and then followed the left bank, with the intention of making El Hadju, above the Sixth Cataract, where he would have the best chance of meeting with Gordon's steamers, as the river will probably no longer permit of their going below that point. By following the river Stewart would have his left flank protected, and would no longer have to carry a water supply. El Hadju is about fifty miles above Metammeh, and Stewart may have reflected, that besides being the boldest this would be the most prudent course, as his position at El Hadju, in co-operation with Gordon's steamers, would be in every respect vastly stronger than if beseiged in an intrenched position below Metammeh. He would, by holding El Hadju, also turn one of the most formidable passes of the Nile whence the rebels can most seriously threaten the navigation.

I may be permitted to add that my personal knowledge of the combined daring and prudence of General Stewart's character inclines me to believe that, given the conditions I imagine, this course of action would commend itself to him as best calculated to impress the rebels with a dream of the white soldier's unconquerable power, and his gallant men with his own high sense of confidence. Should he have adopted this course, we may have no certain tidings for at least another week, as Stewart could not afford to weaken his small force by detaching an escort with despatches until firmly established. Some slight confirmation of my supposition is given by a letter from the late Major Carmichael, who fell in the glorious fight of Abu-Klea, stating that in his opinion Stewart's force would move straight to Khartûm."

The old proverb, "circumstances alter cases," was, however, exemplified in this instance; and whatever may have been the plans originally proposed, here was our small expedition again diminished by the continuous fire of the enemy upon their position, the general placed *hors de combat*, and with an immediate necessity for pushing on, even in face of a probable repetition of the tactics displayed at Abu-Klea. The command devolved upon Sir Charles Wilson as the senior officer, whose appointment had been rather to the direction of the intelligence department, and to what may be called the military scientific duty of exploration, inquiry, and topographical information, than to direct duty on the field. Not a moment was lost, however, and Sir Charles showed both tact and judgment in asking the next senior officer, Colonel Boscawen, to take executive command of the square, Lord C. Beresford remaining to take charge of the force left to garrison the seriba, consisting of the 19th Hussars (whose horses were too worn out to act as cavalry), the royal artillery with their guns under Norton and Du Boulay, half the royal engineers under Dorward, the naval brigade, immediately commanded by Lord C. Beresford, and half the heavy camel regiment under Davison of the 16th Lancers, Major Barrow, under Lord Charles Beresford, being in command of the whole force.

Sir Herbert Stewart, though he had an impression that his

GEN$^{L}$ SIR GERALD GRAHAM, R.E. V.C. K.C.B. G.C.M.G.

COMMANDER OF THE EXPEDITIONS IN THE EASTERN SOUDAN OF 1884 AND 1885

BLACKIE & SON, LONDON, GLASGOW, EDINBURGH & DUBLIN.

wound would prove fatal, was so calm and collected that he was able to reply to Sir Charles Wilson—who asked him what had been his intentions—that in his opinion the best thing to be done was either to go at once for Metammeh, or to repeat the plan adopted at Abu-Klea, of going out to fight for the water, and then returning to the seriba to carry the wounded and the stores down the Nile.

There was no time for hesitation. The enemy, including a large number of regular soldiers, was in force directly in front, and lines of banners could also be seen on the left and right, while the firing from the front and the right grew so hot that a company of guards and a company of the mounted infantry were sent out as skirmishers to keep it down; and during the time that the square was being formed the position became almost intolerable. Several of the officers had very narrow escapes. One had the button of his coat carried inside his shirt just above the belt; a bullet whizzed through the whisker of another; a third had his helmet shot through; and the sword scabbard of a fourth was struck, the bullet glancing off to his ankle.

The march could not be commenced until the seriba was left in a condition to resist any attack that might be made upon it, and it was for this reason that the two small redoubts already mentioned were formed under a brisk fire.

The square was formed with the guards and mounted infantry in front and the heavies and Sussex in the rear; half the heavies being left at the seriba with the royal artillery and the naval brigade, their guns and the "Gardner" and all the camels, except those actually required for carrying the ambulance, reserve ammunition, and water. At each angle of the square were small reserves, dismounted hussars and sappers, to meet any repetition of the attempt to rush upon a corner of the square and bear it inward. Adjutant Crutchley, of the guards, was seriously wounded in the leg while the square was forming. The heavy fire of the enemy was, however, replied to from the redoubts, and as each corps came up, it lay down on the ground in proper position; the place chosen for assembling being just outside the hussars, where

the fire was rather less violent. Bullets were flying constantly, however, and the wretched camels tied down within the seriba were slaughtered in scores, though Sir Charles Wilson records that as he went about to see to what was being done he could not help feeling surprised that the poor beasts "showed no alarm and did not seem to mind being hit. One heard a heavy thud, and looking round saw a stream of blood oozing out of the wound, but the camel went on chewing his cud as if nothing had happened, not even giving a slight wince to show he was in pain."

At about half-past two in the afternoon the advance was ordered, and though the men were still weary, most of them hungry, and all suffering from an insufficient supply of water, they rejoiced that they were going forward to meet the enemy and to fight their way to the Nile. The latter consideration was, in fact, an important one; for it was necessary that they should reach the water that night. The situation was very critical: the enemy was working round to the rear, and yet the gravel terrace in front swarmed with footmen and horsemen with their banners before them. Sir Charles Wilson felt how grave the crisis had become, and yet he records that from the moment he entered the square he felt no anxiety as to the result. The men's faces were set in a determined expression that meant business, and he knew that they intended to drink from the Nile that night. They moved in a cool collected way without noise or any appearance of excitement. Many, as he afterwards heard, never expected to get through, but were determined to sell their lives dearly.

In the direction of the river the country was fairly open, and Colonel Boscawen so manœuvred as to keep the square on the bare gravel patches, that the enemy concealed in the long grass and scrub might not make a sudden rush unperceived. Major Verner gave the square its direction and it first moved round the smaller of the two redoubts towards the river; but the men had no sooner risen from the ground than the enemy opened a sharp fire, in which so many of our men were wounded that they were carried back to the seriba only about 30 yards distant, while the square quickened its march, got clear of the redoubt, and made for the

gravel ridge occupied by the great force of the enemy between them and the Nile. It was slow work, for though the bare gravelly ground was better than the savass grass, the camels could only move at a very deliberate pace. Our frequent change of position as the square zigzagged to keep upon these open spaces rather frustrated the tactics of the enemy, who had to shift their position also from the points at those inclosed or grass-covered spaces through which they thought we should pass and where they were prepared to attack. They kept up a continuous and harassing fire, and our men had now and then to lie down and fire volleys at the places from which the puffs of smoke were seen to come from amidst the long grass. Occasionally the shifting of the enemy could be observed from the seriba, where our men were at the guns and contrived to put several shells among them. The march was a terrible one, however, and the number of times that our men were halted to fire at those "hot" places where many were killed or wounded, consumed hours, so that the sun was sinking low when they were still about 600 yards from the ridge. Lord Arthur Somerset was wounded, many men had fallen, for the firing had now become furious, so that the men fell quickly, and the cacolets and stretchers were filled with the wounded. It was an awful time. To go on perhaps meant fighting to the last man; to retreat meant being utterly destroyed. Suddenly from the right front of the square the enemy moved to the left front, the firing ceased, and the spearmen came rushing down the hill with several horsemen before them bearing towards the left-hand corner of the square.

At sight of this a kind of low sigh of relief was uttered by our men, and as they halted to receive the charge they gave a wild cheer, and remembering Abu-Klea, fired as coolly and regularly as they would have done on a field-day at Aldershot. The bugle sounded "cease firing;" the order was obeyed; there were a few seconds of rest, and when, with the enemy at 300 yards, the call to "commence firing" was heard, the advancing host seemed to melt away before the steady and tremendous discharge. The leaders with their fluttering banners went down. Only one

horseman got to within fifty to a hundred yards, and he also fell. In a few minutes the whole of the front ranks were swept away, and then there was a hustling backward; the Arabs, brave as they were, could not stand that deadly fire poured against them with a precision that seemed to make every man a mark for a bullet. At the same time the surrounding hills were left bare of the thousands of Arabs, who, but a few minutes before, seemed to be about to come down and annihilate the little force. Three ringing cheers arose from our men; victory was ours, but the work was not done yet: the Nile must be reached, if possible, before night had set in, and the heavy train of wounded must be borne thither. To men parched, faint, and weary from the excitement of such a day and from previous want of sleep, to march the remaining distance was a terrible task; but it had to be accomplished.

All the leaders of the defeated foe and about 300 dead lay in front of the square, and, as was afterwards discovered, numbers more had been killed in the long grass and behind the ridge, several of their wounded having been taken into Metammeh. Our garrison in the seriba, too, had kept up their duel with the Arab riflemen at long ranges, and had fired at the masses of the enemy on the gravel hills in front of the squares, where the shells could occasionally be seen bursting and scattering the crowds, so that it was surmised that a large number of spearmen were prevented from joining the charge because they were driven from their position. It was said that the whole of the people of the country side, amounting, with the tribesmen engaged in the battle, to more than 15,000, witnessed the engagement, which was afterwards called the battle of Gubat from the place afterwards occupied by our troops, which somehow came to be spoken of as Gubat, though it was really Abu-Kru. When the square mounted the ridge the flying enemy could be seen in all directions. The square had been halted for a few minutes after the fight was over, to refill pouches with ammunition and give the men a drink of water. Not a man had been killed by the charge, nor had one been touched by sword or spear.

The sun had just set as they resumed their march and reached

the top of the ridge, and to their great disappointment they could not see the Nile, which was still at a little distance. There was the line of green vegetation and the clusters of houses forming the villages, one of which was on their route; but night was falling, and it was thought better to avoid a place, where some of the enemy might be in ambush, and to strike the river at once, so a slight detour was made down a shallow ravine, at the end of which was a part of the belt of cultivated fields containing pease, mimosa, and patches of dhurra. Colonel Wilson, Lieutenant Stuart-Wortley, and other officers went forward to find a place suitable for encampment, leaving the square at the end of the ravine, and though it was now dark they succeeded. The first consideration was to gain a spot on the bank where men and horses could obtain the priceless luxury of an ample drink of water; and this was, in fact, the first desire of the explorers themselves—an unstinted draught that would alleviate what they felt was almost quenchless thirst. They were soon back, however, and the square reached the river about half an hour after dark, the wounded being taken to the best place that could be found on the bank, the men going down in companies to drink, and the camels being turned into the fields of pease, there to luxuriate in a fresh and juicy meal. It was an excellent position, sheltered by two hills and so protected that a picket and guns could have defended it against any force that the enemy could send; and it was afterwards regretted that a regular position was not established here instead of at Gubat or Abu-Kru, to which the square afterwards moved. As soon as the men had had a good drink the sappers were employed to cut bush to form a seriba, and pickets were posted on each side of the ravine by which the river had been approached. The men, however, were dead beat, and as they went up from their drink at the river, numbers of them simply fell to the ground and were instantly asleep, so that there was some difficulty in rousing them and getting them into their places for the night. They had found water, and luckily that (except rest) was all they seemed for the time to care about, for very few of them had taken any rations or even so much as a mouthful of biscuit. With 150 rounds of

rifle ammunition they fancied they would have enough to carry, and so had left the rations behind.

The first care was for the wounded, of whom there were eighty-six, nineteen men having been killed, and two officers—Quartermaster Lima of the 19th Hussars, and Mr. Jewell of the commissariat. The doctors showed splendid qualities of courage, endurance, and professional experience. This was the fourth night that they had been without sleep, and they had been through two sharp fights, and yet were at work until every wounded man had been attended. One of the surgeons fainted from exhaustion before he would give up. The bearer company had also behaved with the utmost coolness, every wounded man was at once picked up and placed on a cacelot on a camel, or upon a stretcher, and removed, making no great outcry, though many were very severely injured and must have suffered great pain.

To have reached the Nile, and an abundant supply of water, was so great a thing that next to, or perhaps before, the opportunity for sleep it was cause for a feeling of thankfulness. There was not a man who had not acted in such a manner as to deserve praise, and though the night was cold just before daybreak, and the rest was short, it was remarkably sweet. Daylight was the signal for everyone to be up and doing, for the next business was to bring down the seriba and its occupants, and to establish a camp and hospital on the river bank. Tanks and water-skins had to be filled, for the occupants of the seriba had but a limited supply of the thick water brought from Abu-Klea. Scouting parties were sent out to reconnoitre up and down the river. One returned bringing in a black slave, who had at once willingly submitted, and declared that there were no Arabs in the direction whence he had been taken. The other had discovered that a village at a little distance was completely deserted; and Sir Charles Wilson at once moved on with the guards and mounted infantry to occupy it, leaving the heavies under Colonel Talbot to protect the wounded. The village which was quite deserted, was well situated on a terrace of gravel overlooking the Nile at about three-quarters of a mile distance. This was Abu-Kru, which for

some unascertained reason came to be called Gubat. It was soon placed in a condition of defence, and ready to receive the wounded, who were guarded by a hundred men of the heavies under Lord Arthur Somerset, while a detachment of the Sussex under Major Sunderland set out to keep a watch on Metammeh and check any probable advance of the enemy. The remainder of the force prepared to march to the seriba and bring back their comrades, who had been attacked, but not at very close quarters, though crowds of Arabs were still to be seen in various directions, and large numbers of them again assembled on the gravel hill near Metammeh as our men were moving off. But they had not much relish for renewing the fight of the day before, for our men, though they were half-starving and much of their clothing was in a very dilapidated condition, were so fresh after their rest and the plentiful supply of water, that they were evidently ready for battle, and therefore the enemy began to disperse again, their movements being expedited by some volleys from long range, which knocked several of them over, and left the way to the seriba uninterrupted. The garrison in charge there received them with hearty British cheering and many congratulations. Orders were at once given for moving down to the river.

Sir Herbert Stewart was not worse, and hopes were entertained of his recovery; but he had to be moved with care, and there were a large number of badly wounded men, so many that the size of the fort had been increased, and saddles, ammunition and commissariat boxes, and all kinds of materials had been used to form its walls, the number of dead and wounded horses and the still greater number of dead and dying camels making a peculiarly hideous feature of the strange and harrowing scene within that inclosure. For the Arab sharpshooters had kept up their fire on the seriba until the defeat of the men who charged the square from the gravel ridge. Sir Charles Wilson records that the men at the seriba then had a quiet night, but that some of them along with the Arab driving boys from Aden began to loot the stores, and worst of all the brandy and champagne, which were medical stores

intended only for the sick and wounded. There are mostly some black sheep in every regiment, and these wretched brutes had, perhaps, had their love of plunder fired by observing that the native drivers had contrived to seize upon some of the provisions which were most tempting to hungry and thirsty men. The officers were little, if any, better off than the men, for Sir Charles found that all his own small supply of stores had been taken, his box broken open, and even his ulster stolen. However, there was breakfast to be had, and the men were at work getting together the stores and pulling down the walls of the seriba, composed of the boxes and saddles that were now wanted for the camels and horses. Two journeys had to be made, for there were not enough camels left alive or strong enough to carry all the stores at once, so an extra guard remained at the small redoubt. One duty was the burial of the dead, among them Cameron and Herbert, lately so full of life and promise. The service was read by Lord C. Beresford, and Sir Charles Wilson himself attended as chief mourner. The dead lying on the field of the previous day's battle were also buried by a party under command of Poë of the marines, and there also the colonel in command was present to see whether the corpses had been disfigured, and if any men had probably been left there alive; but the nature of the bullet wounds showed that death must have been immediate, and though the bodies had been stripped only three of them had been much slashed with swords or stabbed with spears. There were still above 200 dead bodies of the Arabs lying there, some of them fine men from Kordofan, others black soldiers, and others of the Jalin tribe, but all with the Madhi's uniform and a string of ninety-nine beads round the neck. Two or three who were only wounded, and were therefore taken on with the column, said that Omdurman had fallen, that Feki Mustapha was on his way from Khartûm in command of a large force to give battle to our men, and that another force was coming up the river from Berber.

Before nightfall the slowly-marching column had reached Abu-Kru and were all settled down and under shelter; the men who had occupied the village had converted it into a strong post,

and though many of the rush huts and roofs had been burned to clear the ground, and thus much useful shelter for the sick and wounded destroyed, the troops were soon in position, the village in the centre occupied by the Sussex Regiment, the wounded, and the commissariat, the camels and hussars between the village and the river, the guards in front, the heavies on the left, and the mounted infantry on the right.

The position was secure, and rest and food were absolutely necessary, for in effect the men had been on arduous duty from the evening of the 16th to this, the night of the 20th, and on the 19th the square which marched to the Nile had been for nearly nine hours under fire and had engaged in a severe fight though not at close quarters. For the whole four days they had been making great exertions under a tropical sun, with little food and insufficient water, and scarcely any rest. More than a tenth of their entire number had been killed or wounded, and yet when they bivouacked at Abu-Kru (all but the garrison left at the small post) they were full of go and spirit, for they had been victorious; and though they needed rest, and no reinforcements would be sent till they were able to send a message to Lord Wolseley at Korti, they looked forward with a kind of alacrity to the moment when they would attack the enemy at Metammeh, for before this was done no such message would be sent.

The camels had been without water for six or seven days, and had been kept to about a third of their usual allowance of food, and for some part of the time were so tied down that they probably got nothing for about thirty-seven hours on one occasion and four-and-twenty hours on another; while their work was continuous and exhausting when they were laden and on the march. The hussars' horses were equally used up, and were past doing duty as cavalry, and this and the fact of there being a hundred wounded men in hospital, had much to do with the question whether a portion of the original programme of the expedition should or could be carried out by an attack on Metammeh. Sir Charles Wilson thought that the attempt should be made, because of the political effect that might be produced by apparent

inability to capture the place. It was thought that if the assault were made at once, before the arrival of reinforcements to the enemy, possession might be gained, and therefore it was determined to attack a large government building, which it was believed stood at the north side of the town near the centre; by seizing which our troops might establish themselves in the town. The attempt would be doubtful and dangerous, for the resistance that might be made was not to be estimated, and there was the probability of continued street-fighting, which to a small force like ours would be very serious. It was decided that, at all events, some operations should be attempted, and that an attack should be commenced next day (January 21st) as soon after daybreak as possible.

A brief night's rest after all, and even that interrupted by an alarm of fire, because of the ignition of the dry thatch of one of the houses. The men were on parade when the first speck of dawn was seen in the sky. The town was to be reconnoitred, and Major Barrow started first with his hussars, and one of the slaves who had been picked up was to be sent into the village near the town with a letter calling on the people to surrender, and promising that if they did so they should not be molested. The advance of the troops was in double column, with the guns, camels with ammunition, ambulance, and water between the two columns, the force consisting of guards, heavies, mounted infantry, naval brigade with Gardner guns, royal artillery with guns, the royal engineers, and the bearer company.

Lieutenant Douglas Dawson, in his account, says, that the natural way to advance on Metammeh was with the right resting on the river, and for our men to occupy successively the three villages in between them and the town. However, owing to the position in the town of certain important buildings, it was deemed necessary to advance on the place from the north. This gave three disadvantages—it exposed our right flank; it left uncovered our base at Gubat, and it brought us to the town on the flank where the Abu-Klea route entered it, consequently where they (the enemy) would probably be intrenched. So we turned again for the river and occupied the next village, but owing to our

being obliged to show on the high ground we had prepared the whole town for what we were going to do. On nearing it we found the town full of people, and it proved to be strongly held. The natives could be seen bolting in hundreds at the east end, but evidently the walls were manned by the fighting men. From loopholed walls we sustained a well-aimed fire and could practically touch nobody. Our two guns came into action, but did little harm, as common shell goes through these mud walls but only makes a hole where it passes, and with this mud material nothing breaks or catches fire. When close to the town a large force of spears and flags were seen, and we advanced slowly in square hoping to get these to attack. When 600 or 700 yards from the walls, as they would not charge, and our force was too small and too much encumbered already with wounded to attack walls manned by rifles, which would lead to hours of street-fighting, and we could see what a size the town was (being too big for our force to hold, it would rather be a source of danger than otherwise had we taken it), it was decided to retire. No sooner had we taken one step backwards than a round shot was fired at the square and passed over us. Three shells, however, got our range, and the third came plump in the middle. We now deployed and slowly retired, covered by skirmishers and artillery."

While the attack was being made on the town, at about half-past nine in the morning an orderly came from Major Barrow to report that some large flags had been seen in the rear and that they were believed to be those of steamers. This was news, indeed, and Mr. Burleigh of the *Daily Telegraph*, who had been actively employed all the time, rode off to see what they were like. There could be little doubt that they were the steamers promised by Gordon, and Sir Charles Wilson sent Lieutenant Stuart-Wortley to confer with those on board and to induce the commander to land some of the soldiers and help our men in the attack on Metammeh.

They were nothing loth, and the delight of our men at sight of the steamers coming stately down the river with the Egyptian flags flying was justified by the alacrity with which the black

soldiers landed with their guns. The Egyptian commanders Khashm-el-Mus and Abd-ul-Hamid remained on board with their fellaheen, and perhaps so much the better, as Gordon had always declared that those "hens" the Egyptians were useless; but the blacks were as brisk and lively as great boys, and were received with welcome shouts by our fellows. They were sent to the front with their four guns, which they ran into action at once, making some first-rate practice on the town or the village at the end of it, and standing to it though their fire brought a hail of rifle bullets their way. "It seemed extraordinary," says Lieutenant Dawson, "what good troops the master mind of Gordon had made out of such rough material. Never have I seen men so pleased as they were at meeting us. Gordon's name mentioned was like that of a god whom they worshipped. It was even difficult to persuade these enthusiastic allies to retire, as we explained to them that we did not intend for the present to attack the town."

While these new allies were firing from behind the houses and some rising ground, Sir Charles Wilson was conferring with Khashm-el-Mus and Abd-ul-Hamid, and it was then that he saw Gordon's note—"Khartûm all right—can hold out for years"—a note which most people now agree was intended to be regarded only as a feint and designed for the enemy, while the previous messages had said that he had only enough provisions for forty days,—a period already several days past. The message "can hold out for years" was written on the 29th of December, and the previous message that provisions would last but for forty days had been written on the 4th of November: "we can hold out forty days with ease; after that it will be difficult." It was not precisely what may be called a life-or-death message so far as a few days, say a week, over the forty days might be concerned; but here was now the 22nd of January, and it would be perhaps another week before Sir Charles Wilson would be able to get to Khartûm, if even, under the adverse circumstances of the situation, he ever got into the city at all. The letter was for the enemy; but the enemy was now holding the inhabitants of Khartûm as men surround game in a pit, apparently waiting only for some inciting cause or,

perhaps, some superstitious occasion for closing around them and capturing or putting them to death.

Khashm-el-Mus reported that as they came down the river they had seen the force under Faki Mustafa coming from Khartûm, and thus that it would be at Gubat either that evening or on the following day.

What was to be done? The question was one not easily answered even after a serious conference, in which Sir Herbert Stewart, though too badly wounded to take the slightest personal part, was able to add his advice and opinion. It was too evident that if a large force was really coming down it would be next to impossible to continue firing into the pliable mud walls of Metammeh ammunition which would be wanted for a fight with the approaching enemy, and there were scarcely sufficient men in the camp to protect the hundred wounded, though these and the detachment at the redoubt three miles away, were the only troops not now in action. To have attempted to carry Metammeh would have been a great risk, for it was too large for our men to have held it: the mud houses must have been destroyed, and during the time that this was being done the enemy from without might have overwhelmed us in detail. After further consultation with Boscawen it was reluctantly decided to retire on the camp without attacking the town; and the movement was admirably executed, though before it commenced, one good man and true,—Poë, the officer of marines,—was terribly wounded, and was obliged to undergo amputation almost at the hip. He wore a red coat, and was standing up alone on open ground, talking to his men, who were lying down, and so it was supposed that his conspicuous figure drew the fire of the enemy.

The enemy would not come out to fight, though during the withdrawal of the column every opportunity was given for their doing so; but it was to be feared that the retirement of our force had a bad effect, as it was evident that an attack on the town had been intended and withdrawal was an acknowledgment of weakness. Sir Charles Wilson thought it would have been possible to take Metammeh if our force had gone at it at once instead of marching

round it to the south; but it would have been with the loss of 50 or 60 men, and it must be remembered that the column had already been much reduced, and we had, at all events, established a position on the Nile. The houses and villages which lay between the camp and Metammeh were burned, to prevent their being occupied by the enemy, and in accordance with the opinion of Sir Herbert Stewart the wounded were moved down to the river, where they were placed under canvas.

The four steamers which had come down from Gordon were the *Talahawiyeh*, commanded by Nashi Pasha; the ***Bordein***, by Abd-ul-Hamid Bey; *Es Safia*, by Mahmud Bey; and the ***Tewfikiyeh***, by Khashm-el-Mus Bey. They had been fired at on their voyage, and the *Bordein* had been hulled by shot. The *Tewfikiyeh* was quite a little steamer, and into this Sir Herbert Stewart was afterwards moved just before Sir Charles Wilson made the start for Khartûm. The first thing to be done after the return of the column and the removal of the wounded was to prepare at once for the next step in the enterprise, and Sir Charles Wilson had now in his hands the letters which Gordon had sent down at various times; two of them being addressed to the officer commanding her Majesty's troops, and dated in October, when he first sent the steamers, expecting the arrival of the column at Metammeh. He had on the 19th of October written in his journal:—"I hope it will be remembered that with respect to white troops (fellaheen) on board the now four steamers at Metemma, I make you a handsome present of them (officers and all), and request that if you use the steamers you will disembark those men and take them on your list, for we never wish to see them (and to have to feed them) up here again. *You will be carrying out the evacuation policy!!!* If you do not use the steamers, please send them back *empty of these fellaheen troops*, but *send me their rifles*. You will soon have a fine contingent? for I have everything ready for a *general discharge of Cairo débris* (Bashi-Bazouks, &c. &c.) the moment I hear you are really at Berber. I shall not wait to ask your leave, for I have had enough of the *débris* up here, and you can feed them better than we can; *at anyrate they will be off*

*my hands and on yours.* I hope it will be an understood thing that every Egyptian soldier you find *belongs to you*, and that you will not send him back to me. I nobly present you *with them all;* and then, besides that, you have the glory of living representatives of your rescuing expedition. . . . I am sending down the *Bordeen* and *Talatween* the day after to-morrow to Shendy, with orders to leave one steamer at Shendy, and go on with the other four to Berber, and to remain in its neighbourhood. The *Mansowrah* will stay at Shendy, and the *Talatween*, *Bordeen*, *Saphia*, and *Towfikia* will go towards Berber I shall keep *Ismailia* and *Husseinyeh* here."

This will show the amazing energy of Gordon. The steamers were cruising on the Nile ready to meet and to aid the troops when they should arrive; but those troops were months behind the time at which he had expected them. On the 19th of October, 1884, he had in Khartûm 2316 black troops, regulars, 1421 white troops, 1906 Cairo Bashi-Bazouks, 2330 Shaggiyeh, 692 towns-people enrolled; a total of 8665 more or less fighting men; but the white troops and Bashi-Bazouks were, as we have seen, to be got rid of as soon as possible; to "be sent to Berber as soon as it is possible to find transport, and as soon as you get to Berber." He had 12 guns upon lines, 11 steamers, 21,141 rounds of gun ammunition, 2,165,000 rounds of Remington small-arms ammunition, and a weekly turn-out of 40,000 rounds from the arsenal. In the magazine were 4018 ardebs of grain, 349,000 okes of biscuit. The consumption by the troops was 500 ardebs a week. There were 7 steamers, 58 private boats, 53 government boats, and the money in hand amounted to £2900 in specie and £39,195 in paper. An entry in the journal, October 20, ends by deploring the loss of the *Abbas* and the *Fascher*, and saying, "What one has felt so much here is the want of men like Gessi, or Messodaglia, or Slatin, but I have no one to whom I could intrust expeditions like that. . . . I have prepared to clear out of the palace and have five houses ready for occupation. I hope Cuzzi's baggage will be searched, for I feel sure he is a traitor. A slave came in this evening from Waled-a-goun with the usual story of the near

approach of the Mahdi; that Arabs want food; that regulars mean to desert when they get an opportunity. With the reiterated request that I may not have any *Egyptians, Turks, or Circassians sent back to me*, I end this journal." Then comes the signature, the date (Oct 20), and a line saying "the sunset to-night ends the year 1301 and begins 1302."

Other journals, or rather separate volumes of the journal, from the 10th of September (the date of the departure of Stewart, Herbin, and Power from Khartûm for Dongola *via* Berber) to the 30th of September had been sent by steamer for Berber *via* Shendy, addressed "to Lieut.-col. Stewart, C.M.G., or chief of the staff, Lord Wolseley, C.B." A third, to the 12th of October, similarly addressed, was sent by the *Tewfikiyeh* to Metammeh. A fourth to the 20th of October, to Shendy in a steamer; and the fifth and sixth from 20th of October to 5th of November, and from 5th of November to 14th December, addressed to "chief of the staff of the expeditionary staff for the relief of the garrison," left in the *Bordein* for Metammeh on the 5th of November and the 15th of December. These journals were now (22d of January, 1885) handed over to Sir Charles Wilson by the officer commanding the steamer. The last letters had been forwarded by the same steamer, and, with the last volume of the journal, had been intrusted to a Greek.

The entries in the later books were growing more and more significant. On October 22d a letter from the Mahdi reached Gordon professing to relate how he had captured the *Abbas* steamer and the post. Gordon replied that he did not care who had surrendered nor who had been captured. He did not, in fact, believe in the capture of the *Abbas*, and was under the impression that the papers and letters, a long list of which the Mahdi sent to him, declaring them to have been seized, were not in the *Abbas* at all, but were taken from a spy whom he had sent out from Khartûm, the same man who had brought him the news from Dongola of the British advance. This man, he said, had been caught at Metammeh and killed, having, when drunk, let out that he came from Gordon.

The Mahdi's letter, at all events, showed that a large number

of letters, telegrams, maps, and ciphers had fallen into his hands, and that he was, therefore, pretty well acquainted with the whole situation, with all that Gordon had done and asked for, and with much of his correspondence with the khedive, Nubar Pasha, and the English consul-general at Cairo. The letter commenced:

"In the name of God the merciful and compassionate; praise be to God the bountiful Ruler, and blessing on our Lord Mahomet with peace.

From the servant who trusts in God—Mahomed the son of Abdallah.

To Gordon Pasha of Khartûm, may God guide him into the path of virtue. Amen.

Know that your small steamer, named *Abbas*, which you sent with the intention of forwarding your news to Cairo by the way of Dongola, the persons sent being your representatives Stewart Pasha and the two consuls, French and English, with other persons, has been captured by the will of God.

Those who believed in us as the Mahdi,[1] and surrendered, have been delivered, and those who did not were destroyed—as your representative aforenamed, with the consuls and the rest—whose souls God has condemned to the fire and to eternal misery. That steamer and all that was in it has fallen a prey to the Moslems, and we have taken knowledge of all the letters and telegrams which were in it, in Arabic and in Turkish (languages), and in the maps which were opened (explained) to us by those on whom God has bestowed his gifts and has enlightened their hearts by faith, and the benefits of willing submission. Also (we have found therein) the letters sent from you to the Mudir of Dongola with the (letters, &c.) accompanying, to be forwarded to Egypt and to European countries. All has been seized and the contents are known. It should all have been returned to thee, not being wanted here; but as it was originally sent from you, and is known unto you, we prefer to send you part of the contents and mention the property therein, so that you may be certified; and in order that the truth may make a lasting impression on thy mind, in the

[1] The name *Mahdi* is said literally to signify guide.

hope that God may guide thee to the faith of Islam, and to surrender; that you and your followers may surrender to Him and to us, that so you and they may obtain everlasting good and happiness." Then follows a precise list of the papers, &c., said to have been seized, and certainly containing much of the information sent by Gordon as to his position and strength at Khartûm, and the reproaches and appeals made for aid in order to carry out his mission. The letter winds up with a declaration that reliance on expected reinforcements will be useless, and offering that if Gordon will turn Moslem and surrender with those who are with him at Khartûm, that he shall have a safe-conduct and blessings in this world and the next. The Mahdi said that he was then a day's journey from Omdurman and was coming to Khartûm; and in a special postscript referring to a cipher telegram of Gordon's that the troops in the Bahr Gazelle, the Equator, and elsewhere numbered 30,000 soldiers, declared the Bahr Gazelle and the Equator were in his (the Mahdi's) hand, and that they and their chief and all their officers were among his auxiliaries. Two letters purporting to be from the Mahdi's lieutenants in those parts were inclosed in proof of this assertion, and one of them represented that Emir Abdullah (Lupton Bey) had turned Moslem and surrendered.

It had been sufficiently proved that the Mahdi was an unscrupulous liar, and Gordon was indisposed to give more weight to his letter than properly belonged to it; but there could be no doubt that papers, letters, and telegrams had been intercepted. "As for these letters," he wrote of the inclosures referring to Lupton Bey's surrender, &c., "I cannot make head or tail of them, so I leave them to the Arabic scholars of the universities."

Gordon did not hesitate for a moment what reply to send. He at once telegraphed in Arabic to Ferratch Ullah Bey, commandant of Omdurman:—

"Sheikh Mahomed Achmet has sent us a letter to inform us that Lupton Bey, Mudir of Bahr-Gazelle, has surrendered to him, and that the small steamer, in which was Stewart Pasha, has been captured by him, together with what was therein. And he

demands that we should surrender to him. But to me it is all one whether Lupton Bey has surrendered or has not surrendered. And whether he has captured twenty thousand steamers like the *Abbas*, or twenty thousand (officers) like Stewart Pasha (or not); it is all one to me.

I am here like iron, and hope to see the newly-arrived English; and if Mahomed Achmet says that the English die, it is all the same to me. And you must take a copy of this and give it to the messenger from Slatin, and send him out early in the morning that he may go to him. It is impossible for me to have any more words with Mahomed Achmet, only lead; and if Mahomed Achmet is willing to fight, he had better, instead of going to Omdurman, go to the White Nile by the moat. And after this the messengers whom he wants to send to us must not come by the Omdurman; they had better come by the moat before mentioned. And send a literal copy of this according to orders (when it has been sealed by you), by the emissary of Slatin Bey to be delivered, and explain to him that this is by our order."

A bold, determined answer. Gordon would have sent no other even had things appeared worse—if that had been possible. Affairs were bad enough, and the people he had to deal with, the soldiers and servants, were, as he said, enough to break anyone's heart. "If these Arabs (one's servants) are not *eating*, they are *saying* their *prayers;* if not saying their prayers, they are *sleeping;* if not sleeping, they *are sick*. One snatches at them at intervals. Now figure to yourself the position: you cannot do anything with them, while in the fortresses, *eating*, *saying prayers*, *sleeping*, or *sick*, and they know it. You would be a brute if you did (which I fear I often am). You want to send an immediate order; and there is your servant bobbing up and down, and you cannot disturb him. It is a beautiful country for trying experiments with your patience. It is very curious that if I am in a bad temper, which I fear is often the case, my servants will be always at their prayers; and thus religious practices follow the scale of my temper; they are pagans if all goes well."

It need scarcely be said that these journals at Khartûm

contain numerous touches of that dry satirical humour which we have before noted as interspersing the former diaries. The space remaining to us will not admit many extracts, and the journals, that is to say, a judiciously revised copy of them, have been published, omitting, no doubt, some strong references to diplomatists and others in authority, of whom there is still enough said to indicate what the writer thought. Gordon had inscribed on the journals themselves, that if they were published they would want "paring," and the "pared" edition has been for some time before the public.

On the 3d of November he was still uncertified of the loss of the *Abbas* and the murder of those on board, when he received a letter which Major Kitchener had written at Debbeh on the 16th of October, and sent by messenger, saying, "Please inform me by this present messenger, who is paid to return, who were on board the steamer that came down from Khartûm. I am sorry to say that whoever they were they have fallen into the hands of Suleiman Wady Goun Sheikh of the Minassir, and have, I am afraid, been killed. Lord Wolseley is now at Wady Halfa, and it is expected that this expedition will definitely start from Dongola on or about the 1st of November. Special boats are coming out from England for the passage up the Nile."

It was a great blow to Gordon to hear of the fate of the steamer and of his friends, and he was growing heart-sick. He had on the 24th of October calculated that the advance force of troops had arrived at Wady Halfa on September 22d, that they took twenty days from there to Debbeh, so that they were at Debbeh on the 12th of October, and could not arrive at Metammeh (Shendy) before the 10th of November, nine days for 150 miles, and five days in a steamer to Khartûm, so that the 15th of November ought to see them or their advance guard at that destination. "If they do not come before the 30th of November, the game is up, and Rule Britannia. In this calculation I have given every latitude for difficulties of transport, making forts, &c., and on the 15th of November I ought to see her majesty's uniform. . . . I suppose a part of the force will go to attack Berber on the 10th

of November (then I calculate they will be at Metammeh—Shendy), and that a small party will come on here; so we have now 7 days in October and 15 days in November to wait = 22 days—three weeks to add to the 226 days we have already passed, owing to Baring (who I shall remember) and his peace manœuvres. One of the papers Slatin sent to me says that Graham was willing to send them to Berber and could have done it, but Evelyn would not give the order. I asked only for 200 men to be sent there (vide my telegram in Stewart's journal).[1]

"I dwell in the joy of never seeing Great Britain again, with its horrid wearisome *dinner* parties and miseries. How we can put up with those things passes my imagination! It is a perfect bondage. At those dinner parties we are all in masks, saying what we do not believe, eating and drinking things we do not want, and then abusing one another. I would sooner live like a dervish with the Mahdi, than go out to dinner every night in London. I hope if any English general comes to Khartûm, he will not ask me to dinner. Why men cannot be friends without bringing the wretched stomach in is astounding."

It must be remembered that the journals in which these entries occur were composed of a narrative of events at Khartûm, expressions of opinion, comments on the situation, and emphatic declarations of the best way to deal with it. They were addressed to the officer in command, and their delivery had been long delayed. It was the difficulty of communication, the interception of messages, the block of telegrams, that caused much of the misunderstanding. Gordon in Khartûm conceived that he was abandoned, neglected, ignored; those who were anxious to aid him, getting only some out of several messages, thought them ambiguous, or wrongly interpreted such as reached them; and the result was that there had been fatal delay at the commencement of the enterprise, and then an attempt which, because of the small force at disposal, could only have completely succeeded if it had been made immediately on receiving Gordon's appeal, before the enemy had begun

[1] Stewart had kept an exact and elaborate journal which he took with him on board the ill-fated *Abbas*, and it was not recovered.

to close upon Omdurman, or could discover our intention and swarm to Metammeh to frustrate it.

On the 4th of November Gordon wrote, "I looked upon the descent of the *Abbas* as a certainty. I looked upon the relief of Khartûm as most uncertain; hence I sent down the cipher books of the foreign office." The loss of the steamer and those on board was a great sorrow to him; but as he said, with his views (about life and death) he could not say that the death of Stewart and Power was an evil. He had sent down with them not only Stewart's journal and the cipher, but every paper and document in his possession except a firman from the khedive, received in January, 1884, respecting the withdrawal of the people and the troops and the virtual abandonment of the Soudan, giving back independence to the ancient families of the kings of the Soudan regions. This firman Gordon did not promulgate, but issued instead a notice that he would hold Khartûm, and that aid was coming by which the siege might be raised. Gordon had all along declared that nothing should induce him to desert the people at Khartûm who had trusted him, and in effect he says in his journal on the 9th of November, 1884: "If the expeditionary force has come for me alone I will not return with it; it may go back, while I will remain here as governor-general and make the best use I can of the war material which belongs to me while I hold that position. If I am removed from that position by a firman from the khedive, I will still remain here in a private capacity and devote my life and energy to those people who have devoted their lives to me." The firman virtually proclaiming the abandonment of the Soudan he retained, as, if the Mahdi had got hold of it he would have crowed over it, while if he took Khartûm and found it with Gordon, he might say, "Why, you had the order from Tewfik to give up the country and you did not;" but before he could say so, or obtain the documents, he must take the town, and before the town would be taken Gordon would be killed.

December the 13th and no signs of the expedition. "To-day is the 276th day of our anxiety," writes Gordon. "We are going to send down the *Bordeen* the day after to-morrow, and with her

I shall send this journal. *If some effort is not made before ten days' time the town will fall.* It is inexplicable this delay. If the expeditionary forces have reached the river and met my steamers, one hundred men are all that we require, just to show themselves. I send this journal, for I have little hopes of saving it if the town falls. I put in the sort of arrangement I would make with Zubair Pasha for the future government of the Soudan."

On the following day, December 14th,—"Arabs fired two shells at the palace this morning; 546 ardebs dhoora in store; also 83,525 okes of biscuit! 10.30 a.m. the steamers are down at Omdurman engaging the Arabs; consequently I am on *tenter-hooks!* 11.30 a.m. steamers returned; the *Bordeen* was struck by a shell in her battery; we had only one man wounded. We are going to send down the *Bordeen* to-morrow with this journal. If I was in command of the two hundred men of the expeditionary force, which are all that are necessary for the movement, I should stop just below Halfeyeh, and attack the Arabs at that place before I came on here to Khartûm. I should then communicate with the north fort and act according to circumstances. Now, MARK THIS, if the expeditionary force, and I ask for no more than two hundred men, does not come in ten days the town may fall; and I have done my best for the honour of our country. Good-bye!

You send me no information though you have lots of money."

This, then, was the information in the volume of the journal, the latest entry in which was the 14th of December, 1884, and it had just reached Sir Charles Wilson's hands at Gubat on the 22d of January, 1885. The *letters* which Sir Charles Wilson first opened were dated October 24th, and were addressed to the officer commanding H. M. troops. One was an order to Nashi Pasha, the Egyptian commanding the four steamers, to give them over to the English. The other was as follows: "I have sent the steamers *Saphia, Mansourah, Bordeen, Talataween, Tewfikia,* down towards Berber to aid you. On board these steamers are officers and men of Egyptian army. I request:—1. You will take charge of the steamers (though I would not recommend you to change the captains, the *reis* or steersmen, or the crews). 2. That you will

take out of these steamers all Egyptian officers and soldiers. I make you a present of these *hens*, and request you will not let one come back here to me. I include in this all prescribed ranks, pashas, beys, &c. &c. 3. I request *you* will take charge of these steamers and not allow any nominee of Tewfik Pasha to interfere with you in this matter. The officers and soldiers of Egypt have been paid, or their pay has been regulated, so you will have no difficulty on that score. If you do not use the steamers at least take out the *hens*, and send them back empty. You will find that the steamers are well supplied with ammunition, &c. If you please to put black troops on board they will be welcome; but not those heroes of Tel-el-Kebir." This and other letters of the same date were, of course, written when he first sent the steamers down to await the arrival of the troops. There were two letters to Lord Wolseley with some scanty news, and one, the latest of all, addressed to Colonel Watson, dated 14th December, in which Gordon said he expected a crisis within the next ten days, or about Christmas-day. He had evidently given up all hope of help from outside, and asked Watson to say good-bye to his friends and relations. This agreed with the letter of November 4th, in which he said the provisions would about hold out to the middle of December. The small note, which had been dated 29th of December, though it said "All right, can hold out for years," meant little in the light of these official communications; but there appeared to be at least one gleam of hope in it,—Khartûm had not been taken. The attack had been deferred, and this was confirmed by the commanders of the steamers. On the 19th of January the town was still holding out. There was a possibility that the pressure upon it would be relieved by the number of men removed to go down to fight at Metammeh, and news of the victories at Abu-Klea and Gubat might have been carried into Khartûm and given fresh determination to Gordon and the garrison.

It had become a serious question whether even a modification of the original plan for relieving Gordon at Khartûm could be carried out. By that programme it had been settled that Sir

Herbert Stewart should occupy Metammeh; but Sir Herbert Stewart was dangerously and, as it afterwards turned out, fatally wounded, and was kept on board the small steamer, where he occupied the roomy stern cabin. Sir Charles Beresford was to command the naval brigade which would man the steamers conveying Sir Charles Wilson to Khartûm with a small escort of troops; but Sir Charles Beresford was so ill that he could not walk without help, and all the officers of the naval brigade were either killed or wounded: Wilson was to leave Colonel Burnaby in command, and Burnaby had been killed at Abu-Klea. More than a tenth of the force had been lost, and there were about 100 wounded who were not only unable to fight, but who had to be protected; provisions would soon be wanted, and when the camels were able to travel they must be sent to fetch them: the horses were useless except for reconnoitring at short distances, and it was reported that the enemy's forces were advancing both from the north and the south.

Sir Charles Wilson, however, announced his intention of going to Khartûm, so handing over the executive command to Boscawen, he prepared to go down the river the next morning (the morning after reading Gordon's letters) for the purpose of seeing whether any force was coming up from Berber, for he considered it to be important to discover whether the comparatively small camp at Abu-Kru was likely to be attacked, and a body of the enemy was reported to be at Sayal below Metammeh. All Gordon's journals and letters were sent on board the steamers for safety, and it was arranged that Major Barrow's hussars should reconnoitre as far as they could go up the river, and that if they reported that they could see nothing of the force under Feki Mustafa's command, Sir Charles Wilson would at once go down the river with two steamers and two companies of the mounted infantry and reconnoitre in that direction for the rest of the day.

It now became a question how to send despatches to Lord Wolseley, for though Captain Pigott of the mounted infantry was selected for the duty of carrying them, there was not a horse that could go so far, the camels were in no better state for a quick

journey to Abu-Klea, and the guides had not the courage to accompany him. He therefore had to wait till a convoy started on the following evening, and to ride with it to Abu-Klea, after which he was to push on alone to Korti. It was known afterwards that he lost his way after parting from the convoy which reached Gakdul before him; but he took up the route there and rode without a moment's loss of time, so that he reached Korti early on the morning of the 28th, and the commander and the forces at Korti then learned the latest news of the now weakened if not crippled desert column, of the departure of Sir Charles Wilson to Khartûm in two steamers with a detachment of the Royal Sussex Regiment, and of the starting of the convoy for Gakdul under Colonel Talbot, who would return to Gubat on the 28th, the date of Captain Pigott's arrival at Khartûm.

It was then determined that on the following day (the 29th January) Sir Redvers Buller should start from Korti on a march across the desert with the Royal Irish Regiment, followed by the Royal West Kent.

All this was of course telegraphed to Cairo to Sir Evelyn Baring by Lord Wolseley, who said:—"There has been sharp fighting since the action of the 17th instant, and the men have had extremely hard work and, until the 23d instant, little sleep. General Stewart, who, I deeply regret, has been severely wounded, has carried out my instructions. We now hold a strongly-fortified post half-way between Berber and Khartûm, and we hold the desert route between it and this place.

On the large island opposite Gubat there is plenty of green forage for horses and camels. Gubat can be held against any force which the Mahdi can send to attack it.

Four steamers from Khartûm under Nusri Pasha arrived at Gubat during a reconnaissance made upon Metammeh on the 21st inst., and the *Pasha* landed some men and guns and took part in the operations.

Sir C. Wilson left for Khartûm on the 24th inst. with two steamers and a detachment of the Royal Sussex Regiment. Metammeh is occupied by about 2000 men, half of them regulars,

under Nur Angar, who has three Krupp guns, but very little ammunition for them. None of the shells fired from them exploded. At Shendy there is one Krupp gun and a small garrison."

Then followed the account of the operations after Abu-Klea with the reconnaissance of Metammeh and the reason for not attacking it with the almost certainty of a further loss of men; and then—"I most deeply deplore the losses which we have experienced, but in every other respect the results of these operations, so ably and successfully conducted by Sir Herbert Stewart, are most satisfactory, and cannot fail to have great effect upon the future of this campaign.

I have had no letters of any importance from General Gordon. The most recent, dated December 29, contains merely one line, saying 'Khartûm all right—could hold out for years.'

Sir R. Buller starts to-morrow to assume command along the desert route to Gubat. We have plenty of troops, of ammunition, and of food. The Royal Irish Regiment begin their movement across the desert to-day, and the Royal West Kent Regiment will follow.

Sir Herbert Stewart writes in good spirits from on board one of the steamers, and the last report of him says he is doing well; but his wound is very severe, and I cannot expect him to be fit for any more work in this campaign.

The temporary deprivation of his services at this moment I regard as a national loss. He is one of the ablest soldiers and most dashing commanders that I have ever known. I recommend him most strongly to the Queen for her Majesty's most favourable consideration."

Then followed a list of the killed and wounded, and the intimation that the wounded at Abu-Klea were doing well and would soon be fetched in to Korti.

These telegrams, which narrated the actual occurrences, did not carry with them to the public, nor even to those who had more particular knowledge of the campaign, the full impression of how serious the situation really was, nor, it must be said, did the commander, and those who acted under him, appear to realize the

probability that the object of the expedition would not be achieved, and that the forces sent by desert and river would not only fail to advance to Khartûm, but would have great difficulty in retiring from the approach to it without being shattered and reduced to a remnant which would not suffice to carry back the tidings of disaster.

Comments in the press were full of encouragement; there was a faint jubilation among the people, who had been waiting anxiously for news. At last, it was thought, Wolseley and Gordon will join hands at Khartûm.

"Briefly, then," said the leading journal, "the present situation is as follows: The position at Gubat, close to the Nile, is held by a force about 900 strong, and Metammeh, two miles to the north, is still occupied by the enemy, estimated at 2000 strong with three guns, but evidently discouraged by two successive defeats. Two of General Gordon's steamers are probably lying off Metammeh, and the two others may be expected to return from Khartûm to-day or to-morrow. The force at Abu-Klea is safe, and has apparently not been attacked. The desert between Abu-Klea and Gakdul does not seem to be unsafe. The Royal Irish Regiment will leave Korti to-day for the front, and will be followed shortly by the West Kent. These two regiments would add about 1000 men to the force at Gubat; and Metammeh, if not previously abandoned, could be taken without difficulty. More than 3000 camels were probably sent with Sir H. Stewart's force, and Lord Wolseley has not, perhaps, as many as 1000 available at Korti and Gakdul. It may, therefore, be necessary to march the men across the desert, using the camels only to carry water and provisions. Such a march would probably require a fortnight; but, on the other hand, as soon as the position at the front clears a little an effort will at once be made to send back a large body of camels to Gakdul. It may now be taken as certain that Lord Wolseley has obtained a complete military hold over the Korti-Gubat line, and that the difficulty of communications along it will be due only to want of transport. Almost more important, however, is the presence of the steamers on the Nile, which Lord Wolseley owes

to General Gordon's unrivalled achievement. These steamers are probably capable of conveying about 200 men each, and from Metammeh Lord Wolseley will be able to reach Berber in two days, to clear the river banks of the enemy, to meet General Earle's boats when they surmount the fifth cataract, and, if necessary, to tow them up to Khartûm. Thus the power which these steamers confer will modify all the future operations of the campaign. Hard work, and perhaps hard fighting, still lies before the relief expedition. But the crisis of the campaign has passed, and with the establishment of the British force at Gubat and the opening of communication with Khartûm the operations enter on a new phase. This crisis has been sharp, and it has cost the country many valuable and valued lives; but the brave men who have met a fate few Englishmen dread and some covet have not died in vain, since they have won for their comrades a position which admits of no doubt, and they have definitely lessened the difficulties which bar the way to the relief of Khartûm."

A Reuter's telegram from Gubat was also published on the 28th recounting the action at that place and the subsequent operations, and ending by saying: "On the 22d Sir Charles Wilson, with four of General Gordon's steamers, a number of black troops, two companies of mounted infantry, and six guns, bombarded Shendy for two hours, destroying the town almost completely. The occupants were few in number, and showed unwillingness to surrender. The steamers subsequently returned here without landing any of the troops. A number of forts are being erected here. The Mahdi is stated to have 6000 men near Khartûm.

General Stewart and the remainder of the wounded are doing well.

The population of Khartûm is now stated to be 14,000.

A convoy left on the evening of the 22d to bring stores and ammunition from Gakdul.

The inhabitants of Metammeh appear to remain hidden, few of them being seen by the scouts."

This mention of the bombarding of Shendy and the return of the steamers of course refers to the reconnaissance made by Sir

Charles Wilson previous to his departure for Khartûm, after being assured that the force at Gubat was in no great danger of being attacked.

For this reconnaissance three steamers were got ready on the 22d, and Colonel Wilson went on board the *Talahawiyeh* accompanied by Sir Charles Beresford, who had to be half carried to the cabin in which he was placed on a seat.

In accordance with the advice in Gordon's letter Khashm-el-Mus Bey was made commander in place of Nashi Pasha. Two companies of mounted infantry went with Sir Charles Wilson, and Captain Verner with Abd-ul-Hamid Bey took the native soldiers in the *Bordein;* the *Es Safia* following with her own captain and crew. The expedition was chiefly for the purpose of discovering whether any immediate and serious attack was likely to be made by an advancing foe, or whether the enemy was in force at any place on the river bank within a certain distance of the camp; and so decided were the reports that such a force was approaching that it was arranged for the steamers to return immediately should those on board hear any sound of heavy firing in the direction of Abu-Kru. In passing Metammeh a few shots were fired at them from the banks, and the men on the *Talahawiych* replied, but without much apparent result; but on nearing Sayal, beyond Metammeh, the men on the look-out reported that they saw a battery in a Sakieh pit. It turned out to be empty, the gun having been taken away; but a party landed and demolished the battery, at the same time finding that from a sand-bank just in front of it they could obtain such a view of the surrounding country that they felt sure none of the enemy had assembled at Sayal.

Another battery was passed and they were approaching Shendy when on the bank they saw a man standing and waving to them. The steamer was run at low speed in to the bank and he was taken on board. From him they learned that the force of the enemy coming from Berber had stopped on meeting with the fugitives from Abu-Klea. He also said there were only three or four hundred dervishes in Shendy, and that a large part of these were ready to side with the government. This may or

may not have been true, but it was soon obvious that Shendy could not be taken with so small a force as that on the steamers. Verner in the *Bordein*, seeing the first steamer stopping, had brought up near the end of the town and had let some of his Soudanese men land and occupy a ruined house, from which they began to fire at some men in houses opposite.

Sir Charles Wilson, however, refused to land his men and attack the town itself, for Shendy was, he said, twice as big as Metammeh, and being on the opposite side of the river to the camp, could not be held even if it were to be taken.

The decision was justified by the sudden appearance of the Emir Wad Hazma, riding in with a number of followers soon after Sir Charles Wilson's boat hauled off. It was evident that he had been watching, and had followed the boats, and by the time Sir Charles Wilson's steamer reached the *Bordein*, Verner and his men were retiring from the fire of the enemy. At a ruined store farther down another man—one of the Shagiyeh—was signalled, and he confirmed what had been said by the first one, so that it was concluded there need be no fear of any large force coming from the north for several days. Shendy was not to be left undisturbed, however, for the steamers having hauled off into mid-stream, ten rounds of shell from each of the six guns were fired into the town as a parting salute, after which the boats went up stream. As they slowly approached the lower end of the island opposite the camp, those on board could see men crossing in boats to the right bank. The presence of men in the island was dangerous, as they might harass the camp by stealing up to it and firing into it, and therefore a number of the Soudanese soldiers were landed with orders to clear the place, a work which they effected by means of a wild and furious discharge of their rifles without much effort to aim at anybody, but with the result of frightening everybody who may have been there, to such an extent that, it was believed, not a soul remained for a longer time than it took to reach the water's edge.

In the camp an attack had been expected, and the work of adding to its defences had been going on pretty briskly, and

though the position was not the best that might have been found if the troops had moved to a greater distance, it was soon rendered pretty secure. There was a gravel terrace about three quarters of a mile from the Nile, and the intervening space was filled by a cultivated plain, at the end of which the ground sloped rather abruptly to the river, and it was on this slope that the camp was formed, so that it was concealed from the land side but exposed to the opposite island on the river side, which was at first guarded by one of the steamers, and afterwards by the Egyptians who occupied a redoubt or earthwork on the island itself. It may be supposed that the men employed in this duty were the Turco-Egyptians or Circassians on whose removal Gordon had insisted, and who were accordingly left behind when Sir Charles Wilson started for Khartûm, to which he now expected he would have to fight his way, as he knew that the Mahdi had taken Omdurman, and Khashm-el-Mus had reported that there were several batteries on the river like those that had been seen on the recent excursion beyond Sayal.

The plan of operations that had first been laid down had to be still further departed from. Beresford, who was to have manned two of the steamers with the naval brigade, and to take Sir Charles Wilson to Khartûm with about fifty men of the Sussex Regiment, was unable to walk, all his officers and many of the petty officers and the best of the seamen had been killed, and on the way back from the reconnaissance on the Nile he had asked Sir Charles to appoint Mr. Ingram of the Duke of Cambridge's Hussars to be an acting lieutenant of the naval brigade, as there were no officers and he (Beresford) could not go about alone. Mr. Ingram had already earned the reputation of a keen and able soldier, and though he had gone up the Nile as a correspondent of some minor newspaper, as a means of getting to the front had taken out a steam-launch, out of which he had to take the engine somewhere on the cataracts, but contrived to get the boat itself to Korti, and joining the desert column had fought in the front rank as a volunteer both at Abu-Klea and Metammeh. Mr. Ingram had proved himself by his coolness and determination to be able to take a

responsible position with the force, and so he was temporarily, at all events, converted into a naval officer, the only one beside Beresford who was to be left at Abu-Kru. Perhaps Beresford would have left him there and persisted in accompanying Sir Charles Wilson, but he was already the worse for his short voyage down the river. He offered to go to Khartûm, but it was thought better that he should remain, as there was no telling whether an attack on the camp might make it necessary for the steamers left behind to join in a fight; and he was even now so ill that he had to lie in hospital, and could only give the assistance of practical advice and instruction, which two of his artificers, who were to go with the expedition, helped to carry out. Sir Charles Wilson decided to take only the two largest steamers, the *Talahawiyeh* and the *Bordein*, which were better protected against the fire that would have to be encountered from the batteries. Khashm-el-Mus was to command the *Bordein* and Abu-ul-Hamid the *Talahawiyeh*, with crews and soldiers from the Soudanese taken from all the four boats and the two best pilots among them, for passing the cataracts. This work of manning the vessels was superintended by Lieutenants Stuart Wortley and Gascoigne and took several hours, even under pressure of the intimation that in another twelve days the cataracts would not be passable at all. It was hard work to get the two steamers ready and to complete the necessary repairs, especially as a good deal of the work had to be done by natives; but at eight o'clock on the morning of the 24th they started, some difficulty having been experienced in putting the escort into red coats, as Gordon had expressly desired should be done, in order, probably, to impress the people at Khartûm and outside it that an English force had really arrived. Red coats had been specially sent out, but they had been lost or looted, and it was found necessary to borrow those of the guards and heavy dragoons, which were sufficient in number and rather too much as regards dimensions when they were donned by the men of the Sussex. Sir Charles Wilson did not feel that he could take more than one officer and twenty men of this corps as an escort, and there were so many wounded at the hospital that he did not think

it right to take a surgeon or even an assistant surgeon. On the night of the 23d all was ready. The Sussex detachment lay down close to the steamers. Steam was to be up by daylight. Sir Charles was able to see that the convoy and escort, to bring provisions from Gakdul under the command of Colonel Talbot and accompanied by Captain Piggott with his despatches, were off in the evening, and it may be mentioned that this as well as other convoys to Gakdul and back were guided by Lord Cochrane, who dispensed with any native assistance and at night kept the route by the stars.

It may here be noted that the reports from Korti, dated the 28th (four days afterwards), said:—

"Our position at Gubat is very strong. The troops have an ample supply of ammunition, and also of provisions. It is believed that the enemy have large stores of grain in Metammeh. They have two Krupp guns there, but no regular earthworks. The houses and walls are, however, loopholed, and the place could not be carried without much loss of life. The general belief is that the enemy will evacuate Metammeh when our infantry, now starting, arrive, and will retire upon Berber.

Upon their way down the party crossed the ground where the fight of Abu-Klea took place. They saw the bodies of a few English dead which had not yet been buried. They had been stripped by the Arabs, but the bodies had been in no way mutilated. . . .

The Royal Irish Regiment started for their march across the desert to Gubat last night. When the men paraded Lord Wolseley addressed them, and complimented them upon the rapid and energetic manner in which they had pushed up the Nile in their boats. Their passage would be nearly, if not quite, the best made in point of time. Lord Wolseley said that he hoped to join them across the desert in a very short time. The regiment is in splendid condition, the men being inured to a hot climate by their recent service in India. They started in the highest spirits, although they have to march on foot, the men carrying their rifles and ammunition. The baggage and water are taken by camels. It is

calculated that they will perform the march at the rate of fifteen miles a day. The West Kent Regiment will follow very shortly. General Sir Redvers Buller and Lord FitzGerald started this morning, and will overtake the Irish regiments to-night. The weather is favourable for marching, having turned much cooler the last day or two.

Lord Wolseley has just received the report of the principal medical officer at Gubat. He reports that General Stewart is progressing most favourably. His wound is wonderfully free from inflammation, and he is suffering comparatively little pain. No attempt has been made to extract the ball, which entered high up in the groin. No bad symptoms have yet presented themselves, and there is every hope that the general will make a rapid recovery. He has been taken on board one of the steamers, where he occupies a comfortable and airy stern cabin. Lieutenant Crutchley, of the Scots Fusilier Guards, who was also wounded, is on board with him. The steamer is lying off Gubat. The hospital tent is pitched on the river bank, and the wounded are housed in tents, and lie on comfortable native beds.

The principal medical officer says that, considering the manner in which they have had to be moved, and the hardships they have gone through, the wounded are all doing marvellously. Two-thirds of the cases are severe, and the number of operations necessary will be large. Surgeon Magill is reported as having distinguished himself by his work among the wounded until he was himself hit by a bullet in the thigh. The principal medical officer reports that he shall send down to Gakdul all the wounded who can be moved, as soon as possible. Any quantity of supplies can be obtained in the neighbourhood if the natives will bring it in. There is no sickness whatever, so far, among the troops."

No attempt had been made to extract the bullet from General Stewart's wound, but yet there were hopes of his recovery; and, indeed, considering the hardships they had had to endure, and the moving from place to place, all the wounded were doing well. Two-thirds of the cases were severe, and the surgeons still had arduous duties to perform. Throughout the campaign the courage

and devotion to duty shown by the medical and surgical staff were beyond all praise. Sir Herbert Stewart was raised to the rank of major-general in recognition of his services, but it was felt, as Lord Wolseley had stated, that there was little or no probability of his ever again being on active service.

As we have seen, the tendency in some quarters in England was to calculate on too large or too decisive a result from the victories that had been obtained, and this tendency was fostered by the reported declarations of several of the prisoners who fell into our hands. Some of these who had been wounded represented that the Frenchman, Olivier Pain, was in command at Metammeh. Captain Piggott, on his way down to Korti, found a large number of the enemy's wounded at Abu-Klea. Some had crawled in by themselves, others had been brought down near the wells by their comrades, and were left there. Everything possible had been done by our garrison to relieve them: and they all seemed to say that they considered the cause of the Mahdi to be lost, as his followers would no longer believe in him after their defeat. It was said, too, that he was sending away all his valuables. It may be feared that these prisoners were placed in a position which they thought would be improved if they said only what their listeners might like best to hear; and throughout the campaign there seems to have been a tendency on the part of some of our officers to place too much faith in the reports or declarations of natives, whether they were messengers, spies, officials ready to protest their friendliness and promise their co-operation, or prisoners, professing to be convinced of the good intentions of the Khedive's allies. At all events, however, the scene at Abu-Klea must have impressed the wounded prisoners with the sense of disaster, for on the battle-field and its neighbourhood lay the bodies of their comrades—heaps of slain—and to bury these was one of the heaviest duties of our garrison there.

Of the steamers with which Sir Charles Wilson was to make the short voyage to Khartûm, we have already given some description. Those "penny" steamers, as Gordon called them, were in fact little larger than those that ply on the Thames, and

had been prepared by Colonel Stewart under Gordon's directions. Rough, and apparently make-shift as they were, they had been admirably adapted for the purpose for which they were to be used. Sir Charles Wilson gives some further details of them which are very interesting, as they refer particularly to the aspect and arrangements on board, at the time that he embarked with his escort and the native soldiers and Egyptians under the commanders sent by Gordon.

"The two boats were fitted in much the same way: at the bow a small space was left for the cable, and then came a rude turret of baulks of wood fastened together with iron pins, and built up from the deck so as to give a firm platform to fire over the bulwarks. The turret was not round, but splay-shaped, to fit the bows; it was bullet-proof, but not shot or shell proof, and it was open at top. In this turret there was one gun firing right ahead through a port-hole. At the foot of the turret was the cooking place, where all day long the slave-girls were baking dura-cakes for the soldiers and sailors. How they never set the ship on fire was always a mystery to me. Behind this hatchway was the fore-hold and a gangway on each side for landing; then the foremast, to which a bird-cage was slung for a look-out man—a sort of iron bucket; next followed, on each side, small dirty cabins at either end of the paddle-boxes; and between the paddle-boxes the midship turret—a square box built, like the other, of baulks of wood pinned together. The floor of the turret was just high enough to enable the one gun in it to fire well over the top of the paddle-boxes: it had a port on each side, and was reached from the after-part of the ship by a ladder which led to a small square hole, through which it took a moment or two to squeeze one's self. From the ports one could get out on to the top of the paddle-boxes. Thus any one going to the turret in action was unpleasantly exposed. Within the turret, shot, shell, and cartridges were lying about in a way that would soon have put an end to a boat not manned by orientals. After the turret came the funnel with many a bullet-hole through it, and the boiler, partly above deck, but protected by logs of wood placed over it. Then came the hatchway

of the main hold, and just behind it a saloon or deck-house, a slight wooden structure divided into two rooms and having a narrow passage running round it. On the top of the saloon a place had been prepared for infantry—by making walls of boiler-plate iron, except at the entrance. The wheel was on the top of the deck-house, and particular care had been taken to protect the helmsman as much as possible. Behind the deck-house was a little open space in the stern with a hatchway leading to a small hold."

As we have before noted, sheets of boiler-plate iron fixed to wooden stanchions and with a beam on the top of the stanchion so placed as to leave a space between it and the top of the plates sufficiently wide to fire through, had been placed round the sides of the ship and at the bulwarks and deck-house, but some of these stanchions had been broken and the sheets of iron torn away. When the steamers were overhauled, the fore-hold contained some ammunition, an enormous quantity of dhurra, "loot" of various kinds, and wood for the steamer, while in the main-hold were rifle ammunition, firewood, sacks of dhurra, bedding, loot, women, a baby or two, and a herd of goats for milk. In the after-hold were the loot and property of the commandant. Every corner of the space below the deck was full of dhurra, Indian corn, and "loot," but as provisions had to be taken for the relief of the garrison at Khartûm, the decks themselves were piled with sacks of dhurra. These made it difficult for such a number of men to move about much, and when it is added that the Soudanese crews, during the five months that they had been living on the Nile and played the part of river pirates, had suffered all kinds of filth to accumulate, it may be judged that the condition of all on board was disagreeable enough, especially as the steamers were infested with swarms of rats. A swarm of rats and a heterogeneous crowd of human beings within the limits of such a small vessel taxes the imagination, as it taxed the endurance of the English escort. There was no help for it, and there had been no time to clear out the steamers, even if any other arrangement could have been adopted in face of the fact that the native crews, the native soldiers, and the native

artificers were all divided into companies or gangs under their own officers. The commandant was supposed to have control over the movements of the ship and of the soldiers when they landed, but there was an officer commanding the black regulars, who had once been slaves; Bashi-Bazouk officers, who had brought their own slaves; an officer of artillery; an officer of the Shagiyehs; a captain of the crew; chiefs of the sailors, chiefs of the caulkers, the carpenters, and even the wood-cutters; and then the *reis* or pilot and his assistants, who navigated the vessel, the helmsman, the chief engineer and his assistants; and added to these were the black women, who ground the dhurra, slave-girls, who, throughout the subsequent dangers and in the midst of firing from batteries and fusillades from rifles, went on with their work quite calmly, grinding the grain by rubbing it between two straight pieces of stone; mixing the meal with water into a sort of porridge or batter, a lump of which, thrown on a large round iron plate, heated by a wood fire, and spread out with a little stick till it covered the iron plate, was converted into a thin pancake something like a "passover" cake, and being stripped off the plate was ready for eating.

What a strange assemblage on those two "penny steamers!" soldiers, who were all slaves, and all the officers black, except the Egyptian artillery officers; the Bashi-Bazouks, composed of black slaves; Shagiyehs, and half-castes; the Bashi officers, Turks, Kurds, and Circassians; the sailors, blacks; the engineers, Egyptians. Added to these were many men who had hidden themselves among the bags of dhurra,—some of them wounded men,—stowaways who sought to return to their families. The confusion before getting the men to work was disheartening; the turmoil, chatter, laughter, and shouting was deafening; but the blacks were like big good-humoured boys with tempers that even the occasional use of the courbash did not utterly spoil; and they could fight. The soldiers were armed with Remington rifles, but no bayonets. They had spears instead, and some of them carried swords also. Many of the men wore the decoration or medal given them by Gordon for the siege of Khartûm. There was

plenty of ammunition on board, and the guns were brass pieces (*canons rayés*) throwing a nine-pound shell.

Khashm-el-Mus, the commander, was Melik, or King of the Shagiyeh in the adjoining country on the right bank, and is described by Sir Charles Wilson as a rather short man of about fifty-three with grayish beard. He could neither read nor write; but Muhammed Bey Abud, a shrewd little fellow, grandson of the commander of the Shagiyehs who conquered Dongola at the end of the last century, did both for him, assisted by Sheikh Mahmud, one of Gordon's trusted messengers, who was shut out of Khartûm while on a mission to Sidi Osman at Kassala.

It appears that Khashm did nothing but sit and drink coffee and smoke. He, with Muhammed Ibrahim the interpreter, Gascoigne, and Sir Charles Wilson, occupied the saloon, in the small room at the back of which were the two servants and the native workman, and at the top of the deck-house ten men of the Sussex, who with all their belongings,—arms, ammunition, kit, and rations, may be said to have been in a little citadel commanding the whole ship in case of mutiny or any misunderstanding, no one being allowed to go to their quarters except the two helmsmen.

The Sussex detachment of a corporal and nine men in the *Talahawiyeh* were under Captain Trafford; and with them were Stuart-Wortley with his servant (who was a rifleman), an artificer of the royal navy, and a signaller. The medley crew of soldiers and sailors was like that of the *Bordein;* but the latter had 110 black troops and the former only 80; but she had in tow a dismasted nuggar full of dhurra for Khartûm, and carrying also 40 or 50 soldiers. All the arrangements, including the occupation of the place of vantage by the Sussex men, were the same in both vessels, and each flew an Egyptian flag at foremast and stern, though Sir Charles Wilson records that he felt inclined to pull these down as he disliked the idea of fighting under the Egyptian flag; but he had no others to put in their place, and the steamers after all belonged to the Khedive.

There was no interpreter on the *Talahawiyeh*, and Stewart Wortley had to make the best of his knowledge of Arabic,

"helped out by strong English and much vigour of action." The commander of this vessel, Abd-ul-Hamid, also a Shagiyeh and related to Khashm-el-Mus, was a tall slight youth who had been highly recommended in a letter from Gordon, but whose chief characteristics appear to have been a petulant and sulky temper and a personal vanity which found expression in fine clothes, or rather in gorgeous-coloured robes. He bade fair to be a troublesome customer, and did not altogether confute the opinion that he was not to be completely trusted. There was no time to give effect to mere suspicions, however, nor to change the order of arrangement. The steamers were to go with all speed to Khartûm, and in order successfully to pass the batteries of the enemy on the banks, the Sussex men were to fire volleys at the embrasures directly they were within range. They could be relied on to do this duty steadily, and so might, at all events, diminish the attacks of the batteries; but the native soldiers were under little or no control, and therefore the only useful order they were likely to obey was to fire at any one who fired at them.

The end of the island was soon passed, and then the steamers began to open their voyage. A friendly native Shagiyeh was taken on board from the right bank, and he reported a battery with a gun a short distance ahead; but when Gascoigne, Trafford, and Stuart-Wortley with black troops landed, they found that the gun had been very lately removed, the marks of the wheels being still quite fresh. Some more natives who also went on board said that the gun had been put there by Wad Hamza, the Emir of Shendy, to prevent the steamers from going up, and that he had taken it away again on hearing that the steamers had gone down to Shendy. The same men brought promises from their chiefs to say that they would join our army when it came up. They were sent back with a message that the natives would be well treated by the British. Sir Charles Wilson also sent off a letter to Gordon saying that the steamers were on their way.

Soon afterwards, the "look-out" on the steamers saw at a considerable distance on the right bank a large number of horse and camel men; and this was a part of that force under Feki

Mustafa, which was to have attacked our camp at Metammeh; but Feki did not relish fighting with those who had made such short work of the onslaughts of Abu-Klea and Gubat, and so had halted about twelve miles from the camp. He was one of the Jalins of Zebehr's tribe, and a relation by marriage to Khashm-el-Mus, and had commanded the Arabs on the Omdurman side. A few shots were fired from the left bank as the steamers went on, till at mid-day wood had to be procured, and the blacks were landed at a deserted village to obtain it, but at once disappeared in search for loot instead of pulling down the houses for the sake of the timber, which had to be chopped and sawn into convenient lengths for the furnace, or split into firewood. The kourbash had to be pretty freely applied by the native officers before these wild fellows could be prevailed upon to leave a camel which they had found and killed, and the carcass of which had been slightly scorched or half cooked, at fires lighted on the ground. Curiously enough, one of them had gone up to Sir Charles Wilson as he was sitting watching them some time before and had inquired whether he wanted a camel, as they had found one. On his replying "No," they of course concluded that they could appropriate it for their own larder, and the object of their landing was entirely neglected. Even after the kourbash, they bolted off to the steamers with their joints of half-raw camel flesh and then returned to their work.

The steamers went at a slow pace, for they were heavily laden, and the water was so low that it was difficult to avoid the sand-banks, so that night had fallen when they reached a place on the right bank, where they could make fast and land the black fellows to cook and eat their dinners, while the officers all dined together, the two Mohammedans sharing one great dish which was placed upon the floor.

It was an enterprise of forlorn hope, not to the officers, who were sanguine of success, but to their commander, Colonel Wilson, who, even should he be able to make his way to Khartûm with those twenty British soldiers with their borrowed scarlet tunics, would reach there long after the time that he had first been expected, and then could take no better message for Gordon than

that no further relief could reach the place before the second week in March, that the force that was waiting at Gubat had been diminished by hard fighting, wounds, and fatigue, and that, as the few men who had come as an escort must return to camp, all that might be possible was to help in making a sortie as a kind of demonstration that would alarm the Mahdi's forces and (equally important) obtain provisions for the beleaguered and starving garrison.

At daylight the steamers were on their way again, for it was a race not only against time, but against the fast-falling Nile, and already there would be some difficulty in passing the cataracts. Then there were stoppages for wood, a large quantity of which was burned by the steamers, and to obtain which it was necessary to land men to pull down the houses of the deserted villages. The friendly natives, a few of whom were met here and there, reported that the victories of the English had produced a great effect, and it was known that another English army was coming up the Nile and across the desert, the numbers being, of course, much exaggerated. At Jebel Tanjur, a small isolated hill near the bank, and at Wad Habashi, a strong position where the steamers had before been fired at from a battery, it was found that Feki Mustafa had removed the guns, and all went fairly well, as beyond that place there was a good stretch of water for three or four miles. But the captains wanted to draw up at the head of it, as there the cataract commenced, and they declared they could reach no safe place to haul up at before dark. An hour and a half of daylight remained, which it would be folly to lose, and by dint of violent language and as violent gestures the captain of the *Talahawiych* consented to enter the Shabloka Cataract followed by the *Bordein.*

"Open stretches of water with dangerous rapids in which there are many rocks," writes Sir Charles Wilson. "I could not help thinking of Gordon's 'praying up' the nuggars on the Upper Nile."

The *Talahawiych* went on, and passing the last rapid got 500 yards ahead to Hassan Island, where there was a safe berth for the night; but it was near sundown, and just before coming to the

reach of open water the *Bordein* struck on a rock and was completely hung up. Fortunately it was bright moonlight, and men of both ships worked hard to get her off, but to no effect, and she had to be anchored till morning in the midst of a race and rush of water which, if the cable parted by a sudden slip of the vessel, would send her nobody quite knew where. All next day she lay while the natives working the sakiyehs or water-mills on the banks took shots at her with rifles, the blacks replying with fusillades which seemed to hurt nobody. Then the stores and ammunition had to be shifted, the soldiers landed, and by hauling on hawsers and manœuvring the paddles she was at last got off amidst tremendous excitement.

It was late on the morning of the 26th of January before the *Bordein* was quite clear, and then the men had to be got on board, and it was near noon when the two vessels were together again with the worst part of the cataract still to pass—the Shabloka Passage—through which the two captains were to take the *Bordein* first, and then return to bring up the other boat. The passage was through a channel of broken water studded with pointed rocks, and skirting one of a large number of wooded islands all said to be named Hassan, which are found in the cataract north of Shabloka. For some time all seemed to be going well, when there was a crash, and the steamer, shaking from stem to stern, was fast on a bank of sand from which the soldiers, standing in the shallow water, were unable to heave her off. At last the captain went down the channel on the other side of the island to the west to fetch up the *Talahawiyeh*, which anchored on the other side of the sandbank, the soldiers having landed on the island and marched up. Both captains were thus able to return in a small boat to the *Bordein*, and she was eventually set free, the soldiers being landed to lighten her, and after much skilful piloting she reached her consort just before sundown.

Another day gone, and although there had been no shots fired at the boats during the short and difficult journey, a day of great exertion with but little result. The scene itself under other circumstances would have been worth loitering for. The wooded islands

dense with vivid green undergrowths, the swiftly-rushing water, the yellow sand under brilliant sunlight, made a picture not to be forgotten; but Shabloka, a narrow passage between rocks, was just ahead, and then a gorge between steep hills where the rushing river was only about 300 yards wide. Two more friendly Shagiyehs hailed the vessels as they lay beside the end of the island in the evening, and their report was that there had been fighting round Khartûm for fifteen days, that Gordon had held his own, that the advance of the English was dreaded. The conclusion come to was that the Mahdi was trying to take Khartûm before their arrival. "We little dreamt all was then over," writes Sir Charles Wilson. Surely it would not now take long to fight the way to Khartûm.

Shabloka and the gorge were passed next morning; the Sussex men keeping a good look-out for an expected attack from the hills, but without a shot being fired to draw the volley with which they were to answer it; they reached a village opposite Jebel Royan, a hill from which, it was said, Khartûm could be seen. More wood was wanted here and hostilities commenced again, increasing as the steamers entered open water between flat banks, and continuing in a desultory way till night, when the men landed and, protected by a picket of the Sussex, went for wood to a deserted village at some distance from the river bank, and were at work till one o'clock on the morning of the 28th. In the afternoon, before reaching this place, a man on the bank had called out that another man on a camel had passed down with the news that Khartûm was taken and Gordon killed; but the same report had been made over and over again for weeks, and now the goal was almost in sight.

At six o'clock in the morning (the 28th) the *Bordein* led the way into Khartûm; the Sussex men ready to fire volleys at the embrasure of the batteries while the guns of the steamers kept them engaged. A heliostat was to be used to signal to Gordon. At half-past seven they passed a hill which had once been occupied by a battery and guns to command the river, but there was no one there; then past Abu Alim, the seat of one of the Mahdi's emirs, and there lay Khartûm in the distance.

A warning shout from the bank reached them, saying that the town had fallen and that Gordon had been killed two days before; but the steamers were in for it now, and fighting soon began in earnest. Sir Charles Wilson went with the commander and the interpreter into the midship turret, whence he could give orders at once to the captain, the reis, and the engineer; while the commander crouched in a corner out of the way of the bullets.

Halfiyeh was reached, but it was a scene of desolation, almost utterly destroyed; and then began a *feu d'enfer* from guns and musketry, answered from both boats in turn as they passed through the hail of shots and bullets, the black gunners naked, except for a cloth round their waists, their captains directing the laying and firing of the brass pieces, the Soudanese keeping up a fusillade, the Sussex men sending volley after volley at the batteries. Both steamers passed through the terrible ordeal without much damage; the native soldiers and sailors were in a frenzy of excitement; and in a momentary lull all eyes were turned towards the government house at Khartûm, which could be seen above the trees. But there was no flag flying on the top of it, and Khashm-el-Mus at once declared that the place must have been taken, as Gordon kept the flag always floating above that roof. The truth had to be learned at any cost, and the steamers went on their course only to be again assailed by two guns and a heavy rifle fire from both banks just after passing Shamba, and all the way to Omdurman, while at the edge of Tuti Island a long ditch protected a line of men who kept up a continuous discharge at about 160 yards.

At first Sir Charles Wilson thought that the island was in the hands of Gordon, for the bullets of these men behind the ditch went across to the other bank, where the enemy's sharpshooters were stationed, and he actually gave orders to cease firing, and to run nearer to the bank that they might shout an inquiry. He even got outside the turret in the eagerness of his belief that these were men sent by Gordon to help the steamers; but a storm of bullets drove him back again to give the order to go on to Khartûm, which might be still holding out against the enemy.

Khashm was already certain that all was over, and that they

were running into the jaws of destruction; and it soon appeared that this was so, for guns from Omdurman, and guns from Khartûm, or from the end of the island near the city, poured out their fire, while a roll of musketry from each bank of the river kept up a perpetual accompaniment to the rush of the hurtling shells from the Krupps, or the hoarse murmurs of a mitrailleuse. On still, till they had reached the junction of the Blue and White Niles, and then they knew that there was no hope of entering the town, or of taking aid to him who had held it to the bitter end. Not a flag was flying in Khartûm. The two steamers which Gordon had kept there were not to be seen; but close to the town stood a multitude of dervishes with their banners, an overwhelming force, to resist any attempt at landing; the trenches at Omdurman were filled with riflemen, there were parties of men on the island of Tuti, and still the storm of artillery raged and roared. To attempt to land would be madness; to remain would be destruction; and the order was given for the steamers to turn and run at full speed down the river; the *Bordein* passing the *Talahawiyeh*, which had been delayed for a few minutes by running aground off Tuti.

All was over; and Khashm-el-Mus, who, like the rest of the Soudanese, had lost everything—wives, children, property—covered his face and sank into a corner of the turret. There would have been a collapse and a cessation of resistance but for the cool, self-restraining imperturbability of the English officers, who roused up the gunner and the native chiefs, not without some strong language.

Through the same course of smoke and flame they went, without responding to the signal of a man who came down to the bank on a white camel and waved a flag of truce; for the Mahdi's emissaries were treacherous, and there was no cessation of the roar of the guns. The steamers were not very seriously injured. One man was killed and five wounded, but all the officers had narrow escapes: Sir Charles Wilson was struck by a spent shot above the knee and his field-glass was broken in his hand. All the men had behaved well, and the Egyptian interpreter proved that he, at all events, was not one of the "hens."

The engagement had lasted four hours, and it was four o'clock before the steamers passed the last guns of the enemy. Then the commander and all the other Soudanese gave way to the crushing calamity that had fallen on them, and nothing but the sense of duty still to be done, and of the necessity for immediate action, would have prevented the British officers from giving way to an outburst of grief for the fate of the man whom they had gone out to rescue.

An island some miles down the river was reached by sunset, and two messengers wearing the Mahdi's uniform were sent out to obtain information. One of them, who was to go to Khartûm, reported on his return that he had met a Jali, who assured him that on the night of the 26th, which meant the night of our 25th to the 26th, Khartûm had fallen by the treachery of Farag Pasha, commander of the regular troops, who had opened the gates for the followers of the Mahdi, and that Gordon had been killed with all his men. The Mudir of Khartûm, Ahmad Bey Jalabi, had also been concerned in the treacherous act.

It was sorrowful intelligence, and so far confirmed what had been said by the Arabs who had been casually seen upon the shore, that a sense of deep depression settled down upon all on board the steamers, and must have told severely on the chief officer, Sir Charles Wilson, whose personal friendship and sincere admiration for Gordon lent an additional grief to news which affected every one, even the black soldiers, who showed with pride the pewter medals bestowed upon them by the great governor-general. But the British officers had other anxieties. The wounded had to be cared for, and Lieutenants Gascoigne and Stuart-Wortley undertook the duties that would have fallen to a regular surgeon had there been one on board. Again the collapse of the natives led some of them to contemplate deserting, even if there were not among them those who were so ready to make terms with the now-triumphant Mahdi that they would have turned traitors and deserters. It was thought necessary to keep a Sussex sentry ready, with orders to shoot any one attempting to leave either vessel. The cataracts were now more difficult than they had been

in going up, and the captains and *reises* were promised considerable rewards if they succeeded in getting safely to Abu-Kru. The usual small causes of delay, however, detained the boats, and the conduct of Abd-ul-Hamid and of Khashm-el-Mus, neither of whom could be roused to action, and the first of whom gave some signs of revolt and bad faith, was an additional trouble. On the 29th, at about noon, the *reises* declared that the cataract which they were then approaching must be passed by each boat separately and with their united aid. This was done without accident, and it was expected that the gorge might be passed before night; but at half-past four the *Talahawiyeh*, which was ahead, struck on a sunken rock and began to go down. The "accident" seemed to have been caused by a disagreement between the captain and the reis, who gave different directions, and the helmsman, not knowing what to do, kept straight on and struck the sunken rock.

Perhaps not for the first time there was a suspicion of treachery; but there was no immediate proof to justify such a charge; and none of the Soudanese seemed to care whether they were wrecked or not. Wrecked they were, for the steamer filled and went down, though not before Captain Trafford and Lieutenant Stuart-Wortley managed to transfer to the large nuggar the men with the two guns, arms, small ammunition, and rations, and then to overtake the *Bordein*.

In the evening, when the natives from the *Talahawiyeh* had bivouacked on the island, and the Sussex men and the officers had gone on board the *Bordein*, the same man who had come down to the bank at Omdurman, waving a flag of truce, was seen signalling that he wanted to be taken on board. He had come all the way on his white camel, and brought a letter addressed to the British and Shagiyeh officers summoning them to surrender, telling them that Khartûm was taken and Gordon killed, promising a safe-conduct to anyone who chose to go and see for himself, inviting the English to become Moslems if they wished for peace, and promising protection to Khashm-el-Mus and his men if they would submit to the Mahdi.

Curiously enough, the messenger, who perhaps was desirous of distinguishing himself by inducing the officers to submit, by means of a lie or two and an artful touch of treachery on his own account, declared that Gordon was alive at Omdurman and wearing the Mahdi's uniform, that Khartûm had been surrendered without fighting, and that the garrison at Tuti had been killed for refusing to submit. Except the last these were falsehoods, too gross to gain an instant's belief on the part of the British, and he would probably have been turned off the vessel and sent about his business with a sharp message in retort to the Mahdi, but Khashm-el-Mus strongly represented that it would be desirable to meet cunning with cunning, until the steamer had passed the gorge and the cataract, where, as fresh guns had been mounted, there would be sure to be a serious attack. Khashm then, on his own responsibility, sent word to the Mahdi that he refused to give himself up unless the Mahdi sent him a special safe-conduct and promises of safety, but that on the arrival of these he would surrender the steamer and all on board to Feki Mustafa at Wad Habashi. Khashm was staunch. He had no belief in the word or the promises of the Mahdi—he had lost almost everything but his life, and was dependent on the English, with whom he had frankly determined to throw in his lot; but men who went on board the steamers endeavoured to persuade him to yield. Their arguments appeared to have some effect on Abd-ul-Hamid, but none on Khashm. It seemed so uncertain whether the captains and *reises* would not take an opportunity of deserting, that the sentries had orders to shoot them if they were seen to make the attempt—though, as Sir Charles Wilson remarks, as they were all of them as much at home in the water as fish, it would not have been very easy to prevent their desertion. The temper and intention of these blacks and their crews was very uncertain, but they all worked heartily enough in getting the remaining steamer and the nuggar safely through the narrow cataract, the steamer going first, stern foremost, and guided by means of hawsers. The captains and reises were praised and were promised handsome rewards on their arrival at Gubat. Gascoigne's servant told the British

officers that Abd-ul-Hamid had plotted to wreck the vessel, but that Khashm had denounced the conspiracy.

Whether the events which followed were the result of treachery or accident was never quite determined; but Sir Charles Wilson, after carefully considering all the circumstances, came to the conclusion that the state of the river and the difficulty of making the passage amidst sand-banks and rocks which were but a little below the surface would fully account for the calamity. On the 31st of January the *Bordein*, following the nuggar, had got through the narrow "gate," and dropped down the remaining part of the cataract, but again had to stop to find wood after having burned every bit that was stored on board, including the empty ammunition cases. An attempt was to be made to run at full speed past the enemy's batteries at Wad Habashi, where the steamer would be in great danger of being sunk by the heavy fire. One incident was enough to cause suspicion of foul play. Abd-ul-Hamid, while the vessel lay to, had contrived to send off a letter by a native whom he had found on the bank, a letter which he swore was to a friend at Khartûm inquiring as to the fate of his family. No dependence could be placed on his oath, but still there had been no sign that the reises and captains were false. They had used the greatest exertions to get through; and when the vessel had been stranded, had shown no disposition to shirk either labour or responsibility. There was nothing for it but to run through the passage in front of the batteries, and after leaving the cataract there was open water until that passage was reached. The low spit of Wad Habashi was in sight, the cataract was left behind, all was ready for a running fight, and Sir Charles Wilson, who had been on deck all the morning, had gone into the cabin for a few minutes' rest with the other officers, when there was a sudden crash that shook them all, and it was known that the *Bordein* had struck on a rock, though, as she bumped off again and seemed to be moving, it was supposed no great damage had been done. But a hasty inspection of the fore-hold showed that the water was rushing in at such a rate that Sir Charles Wilson had to order the captains to lay the vessel alongside a sandspit to prevent her

sinking before the guns, ammunition, and stores could be got out of her. The hole in the side of the steamer was too large and too far under water to be stopped, and an hour's hard work with the pumps and a line of men with buckets failed to diminish the depth of water in the hold. The *Bordein* was a wreck; and to add to the confusion, the sight of the various articles which were being dragged out of the corners where they had been stored, and especially the belongings of the officers in the cabin, was too much for some of the black fellows in the nuggar, who walked up to the spit close to the stern cabin, and made a rush on board for loot. The servants who were getting the things together were being thrust aside when Sir Charles Wilson ran down to the spit and, pistol in hand, threatened to shoot the next man who tried to board the steamer. Then the nuggar sheered off a little, the men on the *Bordein* were landed with the guns, ammunition, and as much provision as could be saved.

It is almost necessary to pause for a moment to consider the difficulties of the situation. The sandspit on which everything had to be landed was the end of a little wooded islet about fifty yards from the larger island of Mernat and completely commanded by it, so that it was obviously necessary to occupy both places until the stores and the men could be moved and a seriba formed on the larger island, which is about three quarters of a mile wide and some miles long, covered with long grass and containing trees scattered at various distances. It was first occupied by a picket of the Sussex, and in a small village in the centre were a few women, who, at the approach of the strangers, fled to that side of the island which was only separated from the mainland by about 300 yards of water, easily crossed in a boat which appeared to be kept in readiness for the passage. There was so little protection on the island that Sir Charles Wilson proposed to march down the right bank that same night by moonlight with the Sussex and the Soudanese soldiers; Khashm-el-Mus and a number of his men having already been sent across from the small island in the nuggar to take them out of the way of temptation while the stores were lying in a heap on the sandspit. Wilson remained on

Mernat with Ibrahim the interpreter, a small active, goggle-eyed Egyptian, who had been a friend of Arabi and yet remained thoroughly loyal, and used not only his persuasive tongue, but his remarkable power of noticing everything, and being here, there, and everywhere when least expected, to control the savage Soudanese and to check the symptoms of treachery. Trafford and Gascoigne returned to the islet to get the men ready to move. But the natives and their officers would not move. Even the kourbash was ineffectual. The black fellows were too deeply engaged in lighting fires and cooking all sorts of messes. The disasters of the expedition had demoralized them. Both they and their officers were in the collapse which is characteristic of the natives under adverse conditions, and it was possible that they might not remain loyal. It was a difficult situation to have to deal with such a strange divided crew and their different commanders, and especially with one like Abd-ul-Hamid, who was evidently contemplating desertion. It must be remembered, too, that there were not only men, but women (female slaves) and children. Sir Charles Wilson recounts how, at the time that the steamer had struck,—one of the black Shilluk soldiers seized a child of four or five years old and flung it into the river; whether under the influence of some savage superstition, intending to appease the river god, or in mere wild insanity could not be discovered, though some of the Sussex men who saw the deed at once pinioned the fellow and kept him prisoner. Several of the female slaves it seems belonged to Abd-ul-Hamid, who sat and sulked in their company, and to one of whom he seemed so much attached that it was thought he would not be likely to desert her, a conclusion afterwards proved to be quite unfounded, for he contrived to get away with his company of Shagiyehs a day or two afterwards, and left the girl behind apparently without the least remorse. Though he was a good riddance the event added much to the anxiety of our officers, who, even after they had done their best to prepare against an attack on the island, were liable to be overcome by numbers and had no means of escaping.

Of course the first thing to be done, even before moving to

occupy the island, was to send word to the camp at Gubat for steamers to come to the rescue, and at about seven o'clock in the evening Stuart-Wortley, who had manned the small boat with a crew of four English soldiers and eight natives, rowed steadily down till they were close to the battery at Wad Habashi, past which they allowed the boat to float in silence and so close that those on board could hear the enemy, who were on the look-out, discussing whether the dark moving object on the river was a boat or not, a point that was decided when the moon rose, by which time the men on board were rowing again, having passed below the battery, and, unhurt by the volleys fired at them, were quickly out of range, though their comrades on the island did not know this as they stood and watched the flashes of the guns.

The distance to Gubat was forty miles, and the rowers on the boat worked with such a will that the journey was accomplished in about eight hours. "No member of our small force as long as he lives will ever forget this morning," wrote Lieutenant Dawson on the 1st of February. "Just at dawn I was woke by some one outside our hut calling for Boscawen. I jumped up and went out to see who it was, and then made out, to my surprise, Stuart-Wortley, whom we all thought at Khartûm. I looked towards the river, expecting in the faint light to see the steamers; then seeing nothing, and observing by his face that there was something wrong, I said, 'Why, good heavens, where are the steamers—what is the news?' He said, 'The very worst.' Then it all came out, and how in the wreck he had left in a small boat and arrived at 3 A.M. I went at once for Barrow, who had been for some time staff officer to Boscawen, and told him, and he set himself to consider the situation. The first necessity was of course to get Sir Charles Wilson off his island, and also to be ready at any moment for an overwhelming force coming down from Khartûm and cutting us off. The Mahdi was now free to move his whole force, numbers impossible to estimate, and besides was largely reinforced by guns, many bigger than ours, and 15,000 stand of rifles.

It was decided to start off the convoy that night with every available camel to bring up reinforcements, and that Beresford in

his steamer should start at 2 P.M. this day, which he did, for the island. Boscawen, who had been ill for some time, not being well enough for the press of work entailed by the new aspect of affairs, now resigned the command to Colonel Mildmay Willson, Scots Guards, being the next senior officer."

The situation of the small expedition on the island was critical, for there was but a handful of Englishmen, and nobody knew how far the natives might be trusted; indeed it was pretty evident that some of them could scarcely be trusted at all. Khashm, however, was loyal, and exerted his influence by haranguing the men in obedience to the orders of Sir Charles Wilson. The interpreter, too, was not only a true, but a brave and accomplished fellow; and there was also Bakhit Agha, captain of the Soudan regulars, who had been one of Sir Samuel Baker's famous "Forty Thieves," and had worked his way up to be an officer in the pay of the khedive. Abdullah Effendi, the gunner who had so skilfully worked the gun in the turret of Omdurman, was a Saidi or fellah of Upper Egypt, and had been for years in the Soudan; and the one-eyed Hamid Effendi, also a Saidi, had been captain of the *Mansourah*, one of Gordon's steamers, which was sunk off Shendy. He had no business with the expedition, but had stowed himself away when it left Gubat and had only come out of hiding to offer himself for hard work whenever it was wanted. Ali Agha, the Kurd, captain of the Bashi Bazouks, too was firm. These men with Khashm-el-Mus were all certain to be killed or made slaves if they went back to the Mahdi, and they, at all events, had nothing to gain by desertion; so that as they could influence the men under their command or authority, there was some reason to suppose that more than half the natives would stand by the English; but it was necessary so to dispose them on the island as to make each company of men a check on the other when the seriba was finished and all were camped on the larger island, except about twenty natives who guarded the sandy islet against the probable landing of the enemy's riflemen. The river was now very low, and the steep bank of the island, from 25 to 35 feet high, was covered by a broad band of thicket or bush, which served as a screen from the

rifle fire on the left bank of the river. It was there that the seriba was formed, chiefly by the Soudanese, who cut large branches of the thorny mimosa and interlaced them in such a way that they would frustrate any attempt of the enemy to make a sudden rush. Inside the wall was a shallow ditch just wide enough for a man to lie down in. There was one gap in the thicket at a place where the bank was rather less steep, and this was made the landing-place where the guns and stores were carried up. Close to the path going down to the water Sir Charles Wilson with Khashm and his personal followers took up their quarters at the foot of a large bush, part of which the men cut away so as to form a small bower or shelter from the sun. From that point Sir Charles could see round the seriba and across the island. The bush was to be a rallying point in case of treachery, where the Englishmen and Khashm and his loyal followers might make a fight for their lives, or whence they might reach the boats. Trafford and his men of the Sussex were close by, then a few of Khashm's Shagiyehs reaching to the entrance of the seriba. A Sussex sentry was constantly pacing to and from the gate and the point at which Sir Charles Wilson was posted.

Even after these arrangements were made, Sir Charles was anxious to attempt to gain the right bank of the river and march down it, for though steamers were expected to come to the rescue from Gubat, it was by no means certain that they would do so, or that they would be able to pass the fire from the batteries without being disabled. Sir Charles sent for the chief officers, one by one, to tell them that steamers would be up in two or three days, but also talked over the possibility of crossing to the right bank and marching down, a plan which they believed would be practicable, as the great influence of Khashm-el-Mus with the Shagiyeh and the fear with which the Jalin regarded him, would keep the natives on the border of the river from making an attack. But some of these Shagiyeh soon crossed over to the island with a pacific message, and as it was impossible to prevent the natives who were not hostile from communicating with those outside the seriba, they were admitted, Sir Charles Wilson and Ibrahim

the interpreter being present at the interview with Khashm, to whom the men (one of whom was his relation, Sheikh Abulata) had brought two letters, one promising him the Mahdi's pardon if he submitted, and the other threatening him with everlasting punishment if he remained loyal to the English. "You are aware that we have been trying to save you, and that you were trying to destroy yourselves. After the wreck of the steamer yesterday—(the letter was dated '15th Rabia the second, 1302,' which represents 1st February 1885), you sent a boat to Metammeh to call the English to your assistance. Should the boat be destined to get there safely, and should the English come and take you with them to Europe, Rome, and Constantinople, remember that we shall conquer all the same, as it has been foretold by our Prophet; peace be unto him. If you live long enough you will see the troops of the Mahdi spreading over Europe, Rome, and Constantinople, after which there will be nothing left for you but hell and damnation."

This letter was addressed from Muhammed-el-Mabarsi, and Muhammed Mansur to Khashm-el-Mus, Abd-ul-Hamid, and Muhammed Abud; and probably the promise of restoration decided Abd-ul-Hamid to desert, which he did soon afterwards, with some of his men, aided by the Greek who had brought Gordon's letters, and like many of his countrymen played double that he might be comparatively safe whatever happened.

Khashm was proof against the message, and told his relation that he meant to keep to the English, who would in two days be at the island to protect him and his companions, at the same time asking the messengers whether they thought any force sent by the Mahdi could take the seriba. The Shagiyeh, who admitted that Stuart-Wortley had safely passed the batteries, replied to a question of Khashm, that they should remain neutral if English troops came up the river. Again Khashm refused to surrender unless the Mahdi sent him a letter under his own seal promising him protection and safety. Ten of Khashm's personal followers were sent off to Halfiyeh to get information about Khartûm and the fate of Gordon, the rumour of whose death the Shagiyeh had confirmed.

They said that many Shagiyeh had been slaughtered after the fall of the town, and that they had now determined to join the Mahdi.

Constant activity was necessary, for there was plenty to be done; and though the men who had come to the island to see Khashm had only a small boat (a sampan) which held but four persons, and Khashm assured Sir Charles Wilson that there were no larger boats below the cataract, as he, in obedience to Gordon's orders, had destroyed them all, watch had to be kept night and day to guard against attack, and the English officers had to explore the other side of the island to find a place where the men might be taken across to the mainland on the right bank. Then there was the small boat to caulk and repair, and oars had to be made from wood taken from the *Bordein*, for Stuart-Wortley had been obliged to take all except the broken oars with him to get to Gubat. There was a good deal of uneasiness in consequence of Khashm-el-Mus going out from the seriba and the place where he was stationed to speak to the Shagiyeh who came to endeavour to persuade him to return to the Mahdi; but, on the other hand, it was from these people alone that any tidings could be obtained of the real fate of Gordon and the state of affairs at Khartûm. At last some men brought a message that the sister of Khashm-el-Mus had come from Halfiyeh and wanted him to go down to the edge of the island to meet her and some other people. He was permitted to go, accompanied by Bakhit and Ibrahim and five of the Soudanese regulars, who were to remain in sight but out of earshot, while a picket of Shagiyeh was placed between them and the seriba. The party on their return to the seriba repeated that a man on the bank had told them that two steamers had left Gubat; and Khashm's sister had confirmed the story of the treachery of Farag Pasha, who gave up Khartûm to the Mahdi. She also said that Gordon had been killed while coming out of his room, and that there had been a general massacre of Shagiyeh, Turks, Egyptians, and Europeans; but as there might be some survivors she wanted money to ransom them. Sir Charles Wilson gave Khashm £110 for this purpose in case any of his family or that of Abd-ul-Hamid were still alive; and Khashm, accompanied by Bakhit and Ibrahim, went out again

in the afternoon, when, to their surprise, they saw on the bank Feki Mustapha, who was in command of the Mahdi's force at Wad Habashi. He had married a first cousin of Khashm, and used all his persuasions to induce him to surrender; but Ibrahim, sharp of eye and ear, heard the sister whisper to Khashm on no account to consent, as the Mahdi had determined to kill him. It was during this interview that Abd-ul-Hamid with one of the reis and the Shagiyeh picket contrived to get away. Affairs were very critical, and it was thought probable that an attack would be made on the island that night before the moon rose. Sir Charles Wilson determined that if Feki Mustapha made his appearance again he should be seized and held as a hostage during the march down the right bank, which was to be attempted at noon of the day following, if the steamers did not appear by that time. In the morning the troops were all ordered to keep within the seriba, and a plan was formed for the seizure of Feki Mustapha by Ibrahim Bakhit Agha with some of his men.

All the natives were in a state of excitement. Khashm-el-Mus was seen to go out of the seriba with two or three of his men; and Sir Charles Wilson had to remonstrate with him and endeavour to control his evident perturbation. The reises were all watched carefully, and the Sussex men who were on guard had been ordered to shoot either of them who attempted to desert.

Trafford and Gascoigne were at the end of the island on the look-out for the expected steamers. All was in a state of tension. If the steamer did not come by noon, the march must be made soon, for something would have to be done to prevent any outburst of excitement which would destroy all discipline, and would perhaps signify revolt. At that moment the boom of a gun sounded from the river below them. The change was instantaneous. With shouts of "Ingliz! Ingliz!" the natives waited almost impatiently for orders. From a tall tree a man could see the steamer firing on the battery at the fort, and that firing continued for a longer time than seemed necessary for the boat to pass the place and come up towards the island. Flags were hoisted on the stranded and half-sunk *Bordein*, to show the

position, three shots were fired from the gun according to the arrangement made with Stuart-Wortley, to show that all was right there, but still the relieving party in the steamer kept hammering away at the battery and apparently neither saw nor heard anything on the island.

One result of running up the flag was to draw the fire of the enemy who were on the left bank, and it was replied to without a moment's hesitation by the Remingtons and shell from the gun. So the conflict went on, and still the steamer, which had just before been almost hidden in smoke or steam, was swinging at anchor and banging away at the battery. Something was the matter—but what was it? An accident of some kind, no doubt. And if two steamers had come to the rescue, as reported, there was now only one, and what had become of the other?

Sir Charles Wilson at once determined to break up the seriba, march down the right bank, and try to join his force with that on board the steamer, knowing that they would then be a match for any number of the enemy who would be likely to oppose them. The order was given, and the Soudanese at once devoted their entire energies to carry away everything that belonged to them, and to steal everything belonging to anyone else that they could lay their hands on. Even the kits of the Sussex men which had been left on the bank while their owners were at work storing dhurra and ammunition on board the nuggar were looted. Meantime the enemy opened a sharp fire on the men who were occupied in preparing to march, and Sir Charles Wilson concluded that some of the deserters were with their assailants, as a heavy and continuous fire was directed to the place where Khashm and he had slept. The stores, ammunition, and baggage, the women slaves, the wounded, a few sailors, servants, a guard of the Sussex, and fifty Bazouks, under the command of Gascoigne, floated with the nuggar to a place on the right bank near the end of the island, and the small light boat was sent to the same place, to which the force marched down after breaking up the seriba, and began at once to cross in the small boat, after lining the bank of the island opposite the point of debarkation with Sussex men to cover the

landing, and placing a line of black sentries across the island to prevent a surprise. Ali Agha went across first with his Bashi-Bazouks and took possession of a little hill, and long as it took to cross in one small boat, the passage was made without any accident of importance. The nuggar was then floated down to a point on the right bank opposite to the steamer, there to wait till the rest of the force had marched down to the same place; for there was the steamer—*Es Safia* they made her out to be—her white ensign flying and the artillery duel going on as briskly as ever. On the bank, when the men landed, Sir Charles Wilson saw the messenger whom he had sent with a note to the commanding officer at the camp in case Stuart-Wortley should not arrive safely, and that messenger declared that on his way he had seen two steamers coming up. What then had become of the other if it had not been sunk by the battery?

The truth was that there never had been two steamers; but a Soudanese seems almost incapable of telling the exact truth, everything must be exaggerated. Lord Charles Beresford had reached the battery, where resistance was expected, at the earliest possible moment, and had almost passed it when the steamer's boiler was struck by a round shot; she had gone on for about 200 yards further before the engine stopped; she then anchored, the Gardner gun and one of the small guns being plied on the battery with such effect that the enemy could neither bring their up-stream gun effectually into play, nor show their heads above the parapet.

This was only found out afterwards, when the force from the island had marched down to a point of the shore opposite the steamer, the black soldiers acting as a skirmishing party to cover the right flank of the column, and by their fire causing several horsemen who appeared on the route to beat a hasty retreat. On arriving at the place where the nuggar was waiting they could see that something was the matter with the steamer, and presently made out that those on board were signalling that the boiler had been injured, but would be mended in a few hours. They also learned that if they camped for the night lower down on a part

of the bank where the water was deeper the steamer would pick them up in the morning.

But there were still some hours of daylight, and after a hasty meal the men were soon ready to take a very prominent part in the fight with the battery. One of the guns was taken out of the nuggar, and Abdullah and his men were soon sending shells into the fort, while four of the best marksmen of the Sussex lay on the sand by the edge of the river and peppered away at the parapet and the embrasures with such effect, that though the distance was about 1100 yards the enemy could not put in a well-directed fire in return, and their attack on the steamer was drawn off to the bank where their new assailants continued the assault. So ill-directed was the enemy's fire that when Lieutenant Gascoigne with two native artificers and a native crew went off in the small boat to the steamer he made the journey and came back without any one being hit, though he was under what appeared to be a hot fire both in going and returning.

All on board the steamer were plucky enough, though one seaman had been killed, and Lieutenant Van Koughnet was wounded. Several were scalded by the sudden rush of steam when the boiler was hit. Mr. Benbow, the chief engineer, who had reached Gubat with the 2nd division of the naval brigade just before Lord C. Beresford started, was on board, and he was busy mending the boiler—a troublesome job, which he said would detain them till night, by which time Sir Charles Wilson and the men ashore would arrive at the point lower down, to which Trafford with the Sussex and Khashm-el-Mus and his men went forward to select a place where a seriba was made for the night, Sir Charles remaining with a few men and the gun to keep up the attack on the enemy's battery and draw its fire away from the nuggar, which floated down with the rest of the men, the wounded, and the provisions and kits. At sunset Sir Charles Wilson's party set off to march down through thickets and cultivated fields, where it was impossible to drag the gun, which had to be abandoned by the exhausted men, who spiked it, broke up the carriage, and pitched both into the river. At the scriba there was no food but corn cobs taken from the fields, and

BERESFORD ON HIS WAY TO RESCUE WILSON—

STEAMER'S BOILER PIERCED BY A SHOT. FEB. 3, 1885.

BLACKIE & SON, LONDON, GLASGOW AND EDINBURGH

the grilled flesh of some goats which the men had caught; for all the provisions were in the nuggar and all the clothes and wraps. It was bitterly cold, too, and a wind almost as strong as a hurricane was blowing, so that the men at the seriba had to scoop hollows in the ground to protect them a little from the biting blast; and the small-boat, in which a few men and a number of women had set off from the nuggar without permission and had reached the spot where the seriba was built, could not be sent back, though a private of the Sussex, who had contrived to come with the truant party and reported their conduct, was sent up the shore to tell Gascoigne the boat was coming. The native crew could not row against wind and stream; and later on two Sussex men and two native sailors again strove to get back to the nuggar, but after two hours' hard work had to return. By that time it was known that the nuggar was aground on a rock close under the battery; for Gascoigne, finding the boat did not return, had tried to float past in the darkness, but had stuck fast. The Sussex private had come back to say that the nuggar was aground; and an hour past midnight a sailor, who had swum from the vessel to the right bank and made his way through the bush, brought the further message that she could not be got off without the small-boat helping to lay out anchors.

By daylight the wind had abated and the boat got back; but with the dawn the firing commenced again, and a strange and joyful sight presented itself to the little force on the bank. There were the steamer and the nuggar: the fire from the former being sharp and continuous, especially as the Gardner gun was briskly at work. Then as the daylight broadened the steamer was seen to run freely past the nuggar and to bring up in the middle of the river, without ceasing to direct a telling fire against the fort. In less than a minute a small-boat shot out from the *Es Safia* and made for the nuggar. On that boat were Mr. Keppel, the second of Sir Charles Beresford's officers, and a crew of blue-jackets. Sir Charles Wilson sent a number of men up the river to draw the attention of the enemy at the battery from the nuggar, which, with the rescuing boat, was only about 400 yards from the fort and

therefore under fire. The men on board and Keppel with his boat's crew went about the business of getting the clumsy craft off, however, and though the rifle-bullets pattered on her sides and shot and shell were whizzing and roaring overhead and in front of them not a man was hurt. The Arabs at Wad Habashi seemed to have been amazed at the escape of the steamer and at the persistent fight in which they had the worst of it. When they saw the little vessel getting up her steam, and noted that she was gliding away from them, they set up a yell of rage.

As the steamer, with the nuggar in tow, came abreast of the seriba, the men there were told to march about a mile lower down where there was a better place for embarking, and this having been reached without opposition, all were safely on board, and after taking in wood for the fires the rescued rescue expedition was on its way back to Gubat, which was reached before six o'clock the same evening.

None of the natives had deserted even when they might easily have done so while the steamer was under fire and in danger of being crippled; and though a court of inquiry was held at the camp at Gubat, and the captains and *reises* were tried by court-martial for the successive wrecks of the two vessels on the return journey from Khartûm, and one reis was found guilty, and sentenced to death, but recommended to mercy because he had brought Stuart-Wortley down in the boat, Sir Charles Wilson records his conclusion that both wrecks were accidental, and due partly to carelessness, and partly to the low state of the river and the sunken rocks, which made it difficult to take boats of the size of the *Bordein* down the cataract, especially when drawing more water than usual because of the turrets and iron plating.

Letters from home had been taken up by Stuart-Wortley on board the *Safia*, but no communication from head-quarters had been received at the camp at Gubat (Abu-Kru), the only reinforcements which had arrived being the 2nd division of the naval brigade, and the second half-battery of artillery. But all the camels that were of any use had been sent to Gakdul to wait for the reinforcements that were believed to be on their way to Gubat,

where forage for horses and camels was becoming scarce; and on the 11th of February—a week after the rescue of the expedition—a convoy arrived, consisting of the original escort under Colonel Talbot, with six companies of the Royal Irish, who had walked the whole distance across the desert from Korti. With them came Sir Redvers Buller, whose presence was at once an assurance that some decided movement would be made.

Sir Charles Wilson had already started for Korti. He had to report the result of the expedition to Khartûm, and the failure of the object for which the desert column had been sent forward. Sir Herbert Stewart still lay in so precarious a condition that it was feared the excitement of talking to him about the fate of Gordon and Khartûm would do him serious injury. Sir Charles, who never saw him again, says truly, "What an ill-fated expedition this has been! The whole Soudan is not worth the lives of men like Gordon and the two Stewarts."

Sir Charles, with an escort from the Guards' camel regiment, started for Korti at half-past one on the morning of the 6th of February, and reached Abu-Klea at 9 A.M., finding the Sussex detachment there unmolested, and strengthened by a detachment of heavies. The battle-field was still a horrible spectacle, for numbers of the Arab slain were still unburied. At Gakdul, which was reached in the evening, the return party met the convoy on its way to Gubat, and also General Buller and Major Kitchener, who were both going thither, though whether the general orders would be to take Metammeh or to retire, was doubtful, opinion being divided between the probability of the programme being to burn Metammeh and retire to Wady Halfa: or to regard the expedition as having come to an end with the fall of Khartûm. On the 8th the party started for Howeiyat, leaving the escort to return to Gubat with General Buller; and at sundown on the 9th reached Korti, where two days afterwards a telegram from the war secretary to Lord Wolseley said, "Express warm recognition of government of brilliant services of Sir C. Wilson, and satisfaction at gallant rescue of his party."

When the story of the expedition, of the fall of Khartûm and

the reported slaying of Gordon, reached England, the public feeling was intensified by the aggravation of party spirit. The questions that were being asked were, Is it certain that Gordon has been killed? Is there any foundation for the rumour that he contrived to reach the Greek Church and with a few of his faithful followers was holding it against the enemy? Is it not possible that he and some of those followers escaped and have reached the Equatorial provinces? In any case will the campaign be continued, if not till Khartûm be retaken, till Metammeh has been destroyed; till the force composing the Nile column fights its way to Berber, and there holds its ground in conjunction with the troops at Gubat; till a junction can be effected with the forces at Suakim and the opening of the route between the two places by the force which is now being prepared to renew operations against Osman Digma?

On the 4th of February Sir E. Baring had telegraphed to Earl Granville from Cairo, "All the reports received here from Suakim go to show that Osman Digma's power is still very great, and, indeed, that it has increased lately. A reconnaissance made by General Fremantle shows that he has a large force under him." At the same date General Sir F. Stephenson telegraphed to the Marquis of Hartington that he had received a message from General Fremantle reporting on a disaster that had befallen a reconnoitring party which, on the 3d of February, went out to Handoub, and being inexperienced were taken too far and failed to observe that the camel-men of the enemy were moving round to the rear, the consequence of which was that the party was cut off and a number of men were killed. The enemy had prepared an ambush, and the Hussars were obliged to gallop round the Arab flank under a heavy fire.

The news that Osman Digma was increasing his force was confirmed; but on the 8th of February an Italian steamer arrived at Suakim from Massowah, which, on the 5th, had been occupied by Italian troops under protest but without resistance. The palace and five forts were in their possession; the Italian and Egyptian flags were flying together, and a French gunboat was present, but there was no disturbance on either side. News had arrived at

Suakim that 350 camel loads of dhurra had reached Kassala, near which town the rebels had been defeated and had lost 350 cattle. Another report from Awadeb said that the enemy had been repulsed there also in an attack upon the El Gueder tribe.

On the same day Lord Wolseley telegraphed to Lord Hartington from Korti saying that the Kabbabish tribe, who had remained friendly and had agreed to act as carriers for the British force, had come in and were taking food to the troops in the desert. The Mudir of Dongola professed his disbelief in the news that Gordon had been killed in Khartûm. Lord Wolseley said:—"It is possible Gordon may, with small determined garrison, be holding out in intrenched church in Khartûm. I can, however, scarcely allow myself to credit this rumour. If authority be true I shall endeavour to carry out original programme." This telegram ends with the following advice:—"The sooner you can now deal with Osman Digma the better. I should recommend brigade of Indian infantry and one regiment of Punjaub cavalry to be sent to Suakim as soon as possible to hold that place during summer and co-operate with me in keeping road to Berber open; the English troops you send to Suakim might then either go to mountains near there for summer or to Egypt to be ready for autumn campaign. Earle is now making satisfactory progress toward Abu-Ahmed." An hour and a half after this message had been sent from Korti a telegram was despatched to General Stephenson at Cairo: "Arrange for immediate purchase of camels for service at Suakim. Further information as to numbers will be sent to-morrow." On the evening of the next day Lord Wolseley received from the Marquis of Hartington the message: "Force proposed for Suakim: six battalions besides battalion and marines now there: four squadrons of cavalry, two batteries artillery, two companies engineers, and section telegraph, besides departmental corps. This will make total of about 9000 all ranks. I apprehend difficulty, and certainly delay, in providing transport for so large a force. Please give your opinion as between this and smaller force, which could move more quickly. Indian brigade and cavalry demanded in your No. 55 is ordered."

It was in a telegram of the 4th that General Wolseley had first referred to the Kabbabish having engaged to carry provisions to Gakdul, and had said, "Saleh has furnished 250 camels, Sowarab and Hawauri have supplied us with over 500 on hire. Fall of Khartûm may alter their feelings for us." This was added to the message giving the reports from the camp at Gubat, and Lieutenant Stuart-Wortley's account of the expedition to Khartûm, and the reports of the natives, one of which was that of Gordon being shut up in the church with some Greeks; but there was little if any doubt that the Mahdi had taken Khartûm, that he had been joined by the Shagiyeh tribes, and that the east as well as the left bank of the Nile was therefore hostile to us. The Mahdi's force at Metammeh was estimated at between 2000 and 3000, of whom 250 were horsemen and 400 to 600 were armed with rifles. It was stated, however, that the natives were in great fear of the English, that the Mahdi was hard pressed for supplies at Omdurman, and that unless he took the field in person he would have great difficulty in persuading his emirs to attack us.

General Wolseley telegraphed again on the following day to Sir R. Thompson: "I only await decision of government to give further orders;" and meantime a letter had been despatched from Earl Granville to Sir E. Baring:—

"I have to instruct you to inform the khedive that he may have full confidence in the support of her majesty's government, and you will also acquaint his highness that her majesty's government have given complete discretion to Lord Wolseley to take all such measures as he may deem necessary for the further conduct of his operations, and they have assured his lordship that he will receive any further assistance which he may desire, either by the despatch of troops to Suakim and Berber, or in any other manner he may indicate. Every effort will be made by her majesty's forces to rescue General Gordon in the event of his being still alive."

On the 9th of February Lord Wolseley telegraphed to Lord Hartington that Sir Charles Wilson had just reached the camp at Korti, and then gave some further particulars of the story

of the expedition to Khartûm and of the rescue by Lord Charles Beresford.

Thus we see that the situation at Suakim, the contradictory stories respecting Gordon and the advance of the Nile column under the command of General Earle, were the questions on which the decision of the government and the protraction of the campaign would depend. The advance of the Nile column was already anxiously awaited by the natives, and to a brief account of this movement we will now turn.

It was but two days afterwards, the 11th of February, that General Wolseley had to announce from Korti that he had just received a telegram from General Brackenbury from the camp opposite Dulka Island, which is about 70 miles above Merawi, giving some account of an "attack well planned and gallantly executed," which he (Lord Wolseley) expected would have the effect of opening the way to Berber without further fighting. Alas! that attack and the engagement which followed,—known as the battle of Kirbekan,—cost us dear. Another brave and distinguished officer, General Earle himself, the leader of the column, had fallen. Truly, the possession of the whole of the Soudan would *not* have been worth the price that was paid for the effort to hold or to deliver Khartûm.

The enemy had been found in position on the 9th of February when the force had reached Dulka Island, and General Earle concentrated the Stafford and Black Watch, reconnoitred the position, and on the morning of the 10th advanced to the attack.

"The enemy held a high ridge of razor-backed hills, and some advanced koppies in front close to the river. Two companies of Stafford and two guns being left under Col. Alleyne to hold the enemy in front, we marched with six companies Stafford and six companies Black Watch round the high range of hills, entirely turning the enemy's position, which we attacked from the rear.

The enemy's numbers were not great, but their position was extremely strong and difficult of access, and they fought with most determined bravery.

The Black Watch advanced over rocks and broken ground

upon the koppies, and, after having by their fire in the coolest manner driven off a rush of the enemy, stormed the position under a heavy fire.

General Earle was among the foremost in this attack, and, to the deep sorrow of every officer and man in the force, was killed on the summit of the koppie. The Staffords attacked the high ridge, and, over the most difficult ground it was possible for troops to advance upon, carried the position.

In this attack their gallant commanding officer, Lieutenant-colonel Eyre, was killed.

Meanwhile the squadron 19th Hussars, under Colonel Butler, swept round to the rear and captured the enemy's camp.

Our success is complete. We have captured ten standards, and the whole of the position is in our hands.

It is difficult to estimate the enemy's loss, but their dead are lying thick among the rocks and in the open, where, when they found themseves surrounded, they tried to rush through our troops. Scarcely any can have escaped.

Our own loss is as follows:—

Major-general Earle; Lieutenant-colonel Eyre, South Stafford; Brevet Lieutenant-colonel Coveny, Royal Highlanders; one corporal and three privates Royal Highlanders, three privates South Staffordshire, and two Egyptian Camel Corps. Missing: one private Royal Highlanders. Wounded very severely: Brevet Lieutenant-colonel Wauchope, Royal Highlanders. Severely wounded: Captain Horsbrugh, Stafford; Lieutenant Hon. J. G. R. Colborne, Stafford; Lieutenant T. Kennedy, Royal Highlanders. Wounded: twenty non-commissioned officers and men Stafford and eighteen Black Watch.

List will follow with written report by special messenger.

Prisoners report enemy led by Moussa Wad Abuhegel, Ali Wad Hussein, cousin of Lekalik, and Hamid Wad Lekalik, brother of Lekalik. All these are reported killed.

The enemy said to have consisted of the Monassir with some Robatat, and a force of Dervishes from Berber.

Our advance by river will be continued to-morrow at daylight,

and I shall endeavour to carry out your instructions to General Earle, with which I am fully acquainted."

The government was anxiously inquiring whether Lord Wolseley had learned any more of Gordon, and on the 12th he telegraphed:—

"Up to date have no reliable particulars about Gordon's fate. Press reports are based on rumours gathered by Wilson's party when descending Nile from Omdurman to Gubat. The mudir and all natives persist that Khartûm has not fallen; but Wilson is positive, and there can be little doubt on the point. Hope in a few days to have back messengers sent to ascertain facts."

Sir E. Baring had heard nothing more than this, but on the same day the following terrible message was sent from General Lord Wolseley to the Marquis of Hartington.

"Following received from General Brackenbury:—

*'Kirbekan, February 11.*

'Following is translation of a document found to-day by a private soldier of Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry in a donkey's saddle-bag about 400 yards behind the position we captured yesterday. Document begins:—

'A copy of a letter received from the governor-general of Berber to the governor of the section. In the name of God, &c., from Mohammed Kheir Abdullah Khoy Fali, Emir-general of Berber, to his friend Abdul Magiel Abi El Lekalek and all his men. I inform you that to-day, after the mid-day prayer, we received a letter from the faithful Khalifa Abdullah Eben Mohammed in which he tells us that Khartûm was taken on Monday, the 9th Rabi, 1302, on the side of El Haoui, in the following manner: The Mahdi (pray upon him his dervishes and his troops) advanced against the fortifications, and entered Khartûm in a quarter of an hour. They killed the traitor Gordon, and captured the steamers and boats. God has made him glorious. Be grateful and thank and praise God for his unspeakable mercy. I announce it to you. Tell your troops.' Document ends.

"It is dated the 13th Rabi, &c. On it is written, 'Received

Friday, 20th Rabi.' I shall continue my advance to-morrow.' Brackenbury's message ends. The 9th Rabi is the 26th January."

There was but little hope of Gordon being still alive after this.

We have already seen what was the plan and what the object of the river column, the advance of which had commenced on the 29th of December, 1884, to establish a post at Handab or Hamdab above the cataract and near Duguiyet.[1] Colonel Colville was at Abu-Dom, a kind of suburb of Merawi, with the vakeel of the Mudir of Dongola, and about 400 of the mudir's troops, with the object of collecting cattle, grain, flour, and firewood against the arrival of the column; but the vakeel was indifferent and defiant, and had eventually to be sent back to Korti under the representation that Lord Wolseley wished to see him. He afterwards confessed that the mudir had told him to give as little help as possible, and whether this was true or not, it was so much in accordance with the shiftiness and wayward treachery of these half-barbarous chiefs that it was felt to be necessary to convince him that his only safety lay in remaining loyal to the English. While he was at Korti his deputy was left to represent him along with the Turkish officer commanding the mudir's troops.

This collection of supplies was the initial difficulty, and as much of the food brought up by the Staffords was wanted for the desert column only thirty days' boat rations could be taken at first. The second difficulty was that of transport, to secure enough grain, flour, and other stores to maintain the strength and health of the men and the horses and camels, and yet to be able to convey them on that difficult river journey, the obstacles to which were unknown, was a problem not easy to solve. The order that companies were to keep together and that the duty of an officer in the last boat of each company would be to do all in his power to urge on and give necessary assistance to any boats in his company that might be falling behind, considerably helped the subsequent arrangements.

It was to Abu-Dom that the messenger returned who had been

[1] Vol. iii. pp. 265, 266.

sent with a letter from Lord Wolseley to Gordon. It was he who brought back the letter of three words, "Khartûm all right," and it was he who delivered the verbal message for the relieving troops to go quickly, by the right bank and to take Berber without dividing the force. This messenger had to be sent on to Korti in the same picket boat which carried the vakeel, and the naval officer in charge had no little difficulty in keeping them apart, in obedience to his orders.

On New Year's Day the Staffords finished the work of transferring to the left bank supplies from the government store on the right bank, and General Brackenbury, Major Slade, and Captain Beaumont rode forward for about eight miles to Belal at the foot of the so-called Gerendid Cataract, a name not known to the natives, and chose that spot for a bivouac. At night they ate their New Year's dinner outside Colonel Colville's hut, and fared well on eggs, chickens, a plum-pudding, a melon, a bottle of champagne, and a little whisky, the pleasure of the feast being enhanced by the arrival of the mail from England bringing home news and Christmas cards. It was late when the officers of the river column lay down to sleep on the soft yellow sand, and on the following morning they were up early, for the advance was made to Belal, where the Staffords in their boats, covered by the Hussars on the bank, arrived in the afternoon, and found a good supply of dates, milk, and bread brought for sale by the natives, the Kasheef Mohammed Wad Kenaish providing wheaten cakes, honey, melons, and milk, a good deal of which was the sour milk preferred by the Arabs.

Before leaving Abu-Dom there had been symptoms of hostile neighbours, for the telegraphic line to Korti had been cut about eight miles from the camp, and the engineers and Hussars who went out to discover what had caused the communication to be broken, saw traces of camels on the way to the desert; and now Major Slade, who went out with an escort from Belal to Hamdab to choose the ground for the camp where the troops of the column were to be concentrated and the expedition finally organized, heard that there was a force of 600 rebels at Birti, commanded by

a son of the Sheikh of the Robatab, who wanted to advance towards Handab against the wish of Suleiman Wad Gami, the Sheikh of the Monassir, who had, it was said, just left Birti for the purpose of laying his complaint before the Mahdi's emir at Berber. Birti was only thirty miles from the place where our troops were bivouacked, and at about the same distance on the right a band of robbers were raiding on the route from Duguiyet to Berber. The friendly natives were now to be left behind, and the pleasant aspect of the country was to be changed for rock-strewn cataracts, a rugged and comparatively barren shore, and a series of deserted huts and hovels. The Gerendid Cataract, known by the natives as Hajen Oolad Gurbar, turned out to be not a cataract at all, but a rapid between rocks,[1] and there did not appear to be much danger in the passage; but there was a report that a band of the Mahdi's patchwork-covered dervishes occupied the right bank opposite Ooli Island, and that the band of the robber chief had been reinforced by forty men from Berber. General Brackenbury chose a place for the camp at Hamdab, a mile further up the river than that first selected, as it afforded a better defensive position, and a view obtained from a mountain, Jebel Kulgeli, about five miles further, showed that there was nothing to stop the river passage for the boats between Hamdab and Ooli Island, the whole country being left desolate and uninhabited. Where any natives could be brought together, however, Lord Wolseley's proclamations of friendly intentions to the people were read and distributed.

On the afternoon of the 4th of January General Earle arrived at the camp with two of his staff. The force under his command was to consist of a squadron of the 19th Hussars (91 sabres), the Staffordshire Regiment, the Royal Highlanders, the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, the Gordon Highlanders, a battery of Egyptian artillery, the Egyptian Camel Corps head-quarters, and 300 camels of the 11th Transport Company. The general was to concentrate the forces at Abu-Hamed, and as soon as he had collected there rations sufficient to last a hundred days per man,

[1] *The River Column*, by Major-general Brackenbury, C.B.

in which he was to be aided by Major Rundle, who had a large quantity of provisions at Korosko, and undertook to have a convoy of supplies at Abu-Hamed four days after the arrival of the column, he was to advance upon and take Berber, whence he was to forward as many supplies as possible to the force which, it was intended, should have reached Khartûm by land. All the tribes were to be treated as friends except the Monassirs, who were to be regarded as hostile unless they gave up the murderers of Colonel Stewart and his party. Supplies might be taken in the Monassir country by a portion of the mudir's troops, who were to accompany the force, and other natives who were hostile might be compelled to comply with the demands made upon them. Abu-Hamed, Berber, and other places necessary to the safety of the line were to be occupied, and it was to be regarded as indispensable that, as soon as possible, 75,000 rations should be placed at Shendy for the force operating by the desert. The native sheikhs might be assured that the English were there to restore tranquillity to the country, and to establish some form of native government acceptable to the people, while the property and the just rights of the inhabitants would not be interfered with, and all those who submitted at once, except the men and their accomplices who murdered Colonel Stewart and his companions, would be well treated.

Letters in Arabic had been prepared and addressed to the sheikhs of the various tribes, setting forth these particulars; and in case it should be found that Suleiman Wad Gamr, and Fakir Wad Etman, the two men who had been most concerned in the murder of Stewart, had fled, a special proclamation was to be issued offering a reward for their apprehension.

No further advance was to be made till the whole force could leave Hamdab. There was no nearer telegraph station than that at Abu-Dom, from which the force was now nineteen miles' distance; but Lieutenant Stuart of the Royal Engineers was soon at work superintending native labourers, who cut and erected poles, to which were connected the wires that had formerly belonged to the old Berber line that had crossed the desert at Duguiyet; and a camel post was temporarily appointed between Abu-Dom and the

camp, so that the river column received the news of the first march of Sir Herbert Stewart to Gakdul, and a little more than a fortnight afterwards (January 23d) they heard of the fight at Abu-Klea, though only few particulars reached them except that the enemy had been defeated after a very determined resistance.

The duty of concentrating the troops as they arrived at Hamdab was arduous, and General Brackenbury had to go once back to Korti, and several times to Abu-Dom. There was, however, no want of supplies, for on a market being established at Hamdab the natives brought in milk, dates, dhurra cakes, and vegetables, and were so well satisfied with the business they were able to do, that several of them afterwards followed the column for the purpose of selling dates and such other articles of food as they could take with them, and some went nearly as far as Kirbekan, three of them being killed by the savage Monassir a few days after the battle.

A report, which afterwards turned out to be without foundation, was brought that a force of a thousand of the enemy armed with rifles and with plenty of ammunition had left Berber and arrived at the wells at Bak with the intention of attacking the camp. This story was the version by Omar, the Sheikh of Duaim, of the news that a thousand men had marched from Berber under Abdul Majid Wad el Lekalik to reinforce the enemy at Birti, and that fifty men had joined the band of the robber El-Zain, who with a party of about a hundred and fifty "dervishes" and a number of cattle and stolen camels were occupying a hill from which they were able to go down to the wells for water. It was said, too, that at the wells of El-Koua, which were nearer to the camp at Hamdab by about eight miles, there were numbers of cattle and camels belonging to the Monassir. General Earle therefore sent to Lord Wolseley for permission to make a raid upon the whole cluster of wells before the column resumed its advance. This expedition was kept a secret except from Major Slade of the intelligence department, and Major Flood, who was to command the party and to take with him sixty of his men of the 19th Hussars, and about ninety rifles of the camel corps. A guide was

procured, and on the 18th of January, under the assumption that they were ordered for a short march out, to be followed by an inspection by the general, the mounted troops moved off into the desert, and then by a *khor*, or dry water-course, made a short cut into the Berber-Duguiyet road. They reached a spot about eight miles from El-Koua by midnight, where they halted till four the next morning, when they started again and reached the cultivated *khor* of El-Koua, only to find traces of the sudden flight of the enemy. This perhaps explained the fresh marks of a camel's feet which on the previous day had been noticed on the road in the direction of the wells. The guide (who afterwards joined the Mahdi) had probably contrived to give the alarm, and as there was nothing to be gained by pursuit, and the raiding party had already travelled about thirty-five miles, it was determined to go no further than to the end of the khor, about three miles onward; there was little water at the wells, and the ground was difficult for cavalry, and therefore, after taking some grain that had been left, and burning a few of the huts, the party returned to camp, having, at all events, caused El-Zain and his followers to retire to a safe distance.

The original instructions as to the mode in which the desert column was to proceed had been considerably altered; but, as we have seen, their orders were to advance through the Monassir country, seize and garrison Abu Hamed, receive a convoy from Korosko, and advance on Berber—on approaching which, when within twenty miles, they were to signal by firing a gun and two rockets every night at midnight, when the desert column, which would have steamers and men six or eight miles above Berber, would answer, after which the steamers would reconnoitre and assist in the attack on the town. Major Rundle had 700 camels at Korosko ready for the march of the escort, and signals had been arranged to apprise him when the column were near Abu Hamed. The convoy leaving Korosko would take such letters and papers as could be sent from Cairo by the mail leaving on the 22d of January, and certain necessary supplies, as paint for the boats and shoes for the horses, were to

be carried also. The plan was as complete as it was possible to make it, but we know how impossible it became to make that junction with the desert column on which its realization appeared chiefly to depend.

The orders were that the column was to leave Hamdab on the 24th of January, and it was originally intended that a battalion of infantry should form posts between Abu-Dom and Abu-Hamed, so that a line of communication might be preserved, which, of course, would have enabled the general to provide for the forwarding of cattle and supplies; but this was found to be impossible, as the men could not be spared, and therefore all the supplies would have to be carried with the force, with the exception of such provisions as could be found on the route and those that would be forwarded to Abu-Hamed with the convoy to Korosko.

On the 20th of January Colonel Butler arrived at Hamdab, and on the following day Colonel Alleyne brought a party of voyageurs, and, assisted by Captain Orde of the rifle brigade, Captain Lord Avonmore of the Hampshire regiment, and Lieutenant Peel of the 2d Life Guards, prepared to direct the advance by the river; while Colonel Butler with the cavalry and camel corps was to reconnoitre along the bank and to select the positions where the force in the boats could encamp. On the 22d he had reached Ooli Island, where he found a suitable place for the camp, and was able to report that the passage of the river was free to that point, the natives having retired on his approach, though a few still remained at Ooli.

To Captain Courtney of the Royal Engineers and Captain the Hon. T. Colborne of the Royal Irish Rifles was intrusted the duties of surveying the river as the column advanced; but the passage of the troops to the camp itself was not effected without difficulty, and the later arrivals did not reach the camp till the day when they were to go forward; when Colonel Hammill was left in command at Hamdab with orders to send on the Cornwalls, two sections of the field hospital, and the Egyptian battery and transport company under escort of a portion of the camel company

under the command of Major Woodhouse. This was to be on the 25th and 26th, and he was then to follow with his own battalion and the other two sections of the field hospital. The Mudir of Dongola had, with much trouble, been induced to order his troops to enter the Monassir country by the right bank of the river. The vakeel went with them to take the opportunity of collecting some arrears of taxes. There were 310 of the mudir's men, who marched out of Merawi with a transport service of camels and donkeys and 120 rounds of ammunition per man, as well as a brass gun, which they used to fire off at night. The original instructions had again yielded to the necessities of the situation, and the leading battalions were ordered to make the advance on the 24th, leaving the rest of the troops and part of the transport to follow as soon as they arrived at Hamdab, which was to have been the point of complete concentration.

The means of providing a sufficient supply of food not only for the British troops, but for 200 Egyptians, 150 natives, mostly camel-drivers, 150 horses, and 530 camels, became a question not easily settled; but the difficulty was increased by the insufficient transport for such a quantity of rations and provender in what would probably be a hostile country. It was calculated that there would be enough food for the men for three months as all the infantry from Korti brought a hundred days' rations per man in their boats, and the other troops carried as much in their boats as practicable in addition to the material required for their special service. It was found possible to save a large proportion of these supplies by purchasing cattle and flour from the natives; and at Abu-Dom fresh meat and dhurra bread was obtained for troops who had brought "way rations" with them for the journey from Korti. At Hamdab a commissariat bakery was established, where four ovens built on the river bank could turn out nearly six hundred loaves a day, and cattle were bought to supply rations of fresh meat, so that the supplies of biscuit and tinned meat were reserved. It was found, however, that a large proportion of the provisions had been damaged in consequence of being imperfectly packed. Numbers of the tins had not been securely closed. Biscuits,

preserved vegetables, rice, oatmeal, and other stores had been damaged by water while they were being transported in the boats from Sarras to Korti. Above a fourth part of the biscuits were comparatively useless, nearly all the cabin biscuits being uneatable.

Horses, ponies, camels all required grain, which had to be carried, for no dependence could be placed on a supply being obtained after leaving Hamdab. There might be some green forage on the journey, but 1500 lbs. or five camel-loads of grain a day had to be provided. There were also water-tanks to carry, in case the force should have to make a flank movement by the desert; and there was all the flour required for the native troops to be conveyed by the camels, who, poor brutes, came worst off as usual, for little more grain than would suffice for the horses could be carried, and unless a supply should be found on the journey (not an improbable event) the "ships of the desert" would have to make the best of such forage as they came across in the deserted fields or patches of cultivated land by the river bank. Firewood also had to be found from day to day, for boats and camels were laden as heavily as they would bear, and fortunately the boats had been overhauled at Korti, and were fairly water-tight and sound, though some of them still bore the tin patches, which had been fastened on to stop a leak or repair a slight damage received on their way up the Nile. A number of articles sent to go with the expedition had to be rejected for the want of the means of carrying them. Many were comparatively or entirely useless. General Brackenbury mentions meat covers and skewers, large pewter measures and beer-taps, pairs of bellows, and coffee-mills. These, however, may be regarded as belonging to the material for a field-hospital of 200 beds, which had been forwarded to Abu-Dom, and the larger portion of which had to be abandoned, including hospital marquees, sheets, and pillows, (except a few for very serious cases,) and even blue waistcoats and trousers. Every extra pound of baggage was a difficulty, and General Brackenbury had to go off to Korti to see Surgeon-general O'Nial, chief of the medical staff, and Surgeon-major Harvey, who was to be senior medical officer of the river column.

The result was that nine whale-boats were to be devoted to the eight sections of the field-hospital, one of the boats to be for the senior medical officer, who would have charge of a few luxuries for the sick. Each section of the hospital was for twenty-five patients, who could be carried in one boat; but there were to be no tents unless urgently required, and they would then be provided from those carried for the troops; nor could a bearer company be organized, but it was settled that the eight stretchers for the wounded of each battalion should be carried by the bandsmen. It will be seen that as the column was to go forward, and could not form connecting posts, the sick and wounded must be taken with it, and therefore each corps was to carry its own sick in its own boats; and the sick of the mounted corps which travelled by land—were to be carried in the boats of the battalion to which they were attached for rations.

These are a few of the details of the careful preparations that had to be made, and we may not unprofitably consider them, because in superficially reading the story of a campaign we seldom are able to realize all that is meant by preparation and organization; and here was an expedition—a river column preparing for a journey which it was calculated would take about forty days—necessarily providing against all kinds of contingencies—for its progress was to be through a hostile, a little-known, and probably a barren country, with the need for constant vigilance against cunning and active foes, who would endeavour to cut off all supplies and lose no opportunity of harassing and misleading. Colonel Butler, who was now ready, had arrived at Korti in his boat manned by Kroomen after having concluded the arduous duty of superintending the passage of the boats up the rapids. He was now prepared to join them on their further advance, for he had spoken in enthusiastic terms of the willingness, good-temper, and constant exertions of the troops, and of their cheerfulness under what were occasionally great privations. He believed, as General Butler had said, that the boat squadron should perform the journey to Khartûm by the end of February, that is to say, in about forty days from the general advance of the river column. It was, how-

ever, understood that the worst physical difficulties with which the infantry would have to wrestle were to be encountered on the first part of the journey; for between Hamdab and Abu-Hamed there are, in addition to obstacles unmarked on the official charts, the cataracts of Tejai, Bahak, Edernah, Kabenat, Tuari, and Om Deras. The last of these was only between 60 and 70 miles from Hamdab, and once overcome the remainder of the journey to Abu-Hamed would, it was thought, be comparatively easy. But the whole of the work would be of an extremely laborious character, as the boats could reckon upon little assistance from the wind until Abu-Hamed was reached.

The latest intelligence before the starting of the column was that on the 23d of December Berber was quiet and contained only a few soldiers, the rest of the force having been scattered in the surrounding villages, but that the town was surrounded by an intrenchment, and some guns were placed on the left bank. At Abu-Hamed, on the 3d of January, there was a small garrison and no defences. Major Rundle and Sheikh Saleh Bey had made a reconnaissance to near Abu-Hamed in November, and the sheikhs who were then there not having reported it, had been replaced by two others. From Birti, news had been brought to the camp at Hamdab, to the effect that Suleiman Wad Gamr, having returned from Berber, had gone to Salamat to meet Lekalik, who had taken reinforcements of 1000 men from Berber, and was at Salamat waiting for more troops. On the 18th of January Lekalik was at Birti with 1500 dervishes and men of the Monassir and Robatab, over whom he had been placed in command, and he was said to have been desirous of advancing to fight the British column, but was persuaded by Suleiman to remain at Birti, where he still was, though Suleiman had tried to induce him to retire to the Shukook Pass. The force at Birti, in front of our advancing column, was about 3000, consisting of Berberines, Monassir, and Robatab, and about 500 were armed with rifles. Their commander was still anxious to come to a fight.

The date which had been fixed for the advance from Hamdab to Birti was punctually observed. On the morning of the 24th

the Hussars marched with half the camel corps, and at the same time two companies of the Staffordshire with Lieutenant-colonel Alleyne and other boat officers moved off by river, followed by the boats of the Royal Engineers, the remainder of the battalion and the Black Watch, with two guard boats manned by Gordon Highlanders. Colonel Colville, with the mudir's troops, kept to the right bank of the river abreast of the boats, and afterwards kept up communication by means of the heliograph. Head-quarters started at about eleven in the morning after telegraphing to Korti that all was going well, that there were no sick, and that the men were in high spirits and longing for a fight. Colonel Hammill at Hamdab afterwards received orders for the artillery and transport to march with their escort on the 28th, the remaining force of the Gordon Highlanders to follow on the 30th.

The column had been handicapped by the alteration of plans made necessary by the course of events, and it was impossible to say with accuracy at what date it would reach Abu-Hamed. The passage of the rocky channels and the successive rapids was so difficult that it needed all the efforts of the troops to get the boats up, and at one place (Edermih) the men had to be landed, the arms, ammunition, and baggage to be carried for nearly a mile, and the empty whalers to be dragged up the rapids. On one occasion some of the boats had to be hauled up for repairs.

But there was another difficulty. The infantry in the boats, taking the only navigable channel on the right bank, were effectually separated from the mounted troops, who themselves had to proceed in a broken rocky and difficult country, and yet it was above all things necessary to avoid being surprised by the enemy. It was dangerous to send on a small force to bivouac far in advance, but at the same time it was essential that cavalry should scout well in front, and that provision should be made for reconnoitring not only the country, but the river ahead. The advance was, therefore, accomplished by sending on a half battalion of the Black Watch to form a post at Kabour with the cavalry and camel corps at a point where the Staffords, going by the right bank, would emerge into the open stream, while a half battalion remained at the bivouac at

Ooli, where they were soon joined by the Cornwalls coming from Hamdab. It is not necessary to follow the military movements by which the force was so ordered as to afford what may be called relays for mutual protection. One remarkable circumstance is recorded by General Brackenbury: when General Earle and his staff rode up the river as far as Kabenat they found a strong fort, with walls eight to twelve feet thick built of loose stones and capable of holding a garrison of 500 men, on the top of a high detached hill completely commanding the river and bank, and a similar fort opposite on the right bank, with swift water running between. The Soudanese tradition is that these forts were built by some Christian power centuries ago, but General Brackenbury says he is satisfied that they are of comparatively modern date. From them an extensive view was obtained, and Colonel Butler, who presently arrived there from his reconnaissance, reported that for five miles to the Kab-el-Abd Cataract the land and the river were clear and fairly open. All the country beyond Ooli camp had been deserted.

Scouting and reconnoitring in front, keeping a strong body in the rear and a good guard in advance, riding backward and forward to see the boats through, signalling from point to point, pulling and hauling the boats through the broken water of the falling river, the column moved slowly forward. A spy from Birti brought word that there were 2500 men there, and that the chiefs intended to attack when the boats were separated in the cataract of Kab-el-Abd. Colonel Butler was then ordered to push on with a sufficient force to come within touch of the enemy; and about two miles beyond the cataract found about 120 of the Arabs, who retired after a few shots had been exchanged. Colonel Colville had also gone ahead with a party of the mudir's men on camels to a village opposite Birti, from which he could see the enemy's camp. That evening Colonel Rundle, telegraphing to Korti, said that the sheikhs computed the force of the enemy at Birti to be at least 10,000 men.

After a further advance, by which the Black Watch and the Staffords were able to bivouac and construct a seriba on Kandi

Island at a wretched place at the extremity of a ridge of black rocks called Mishami, the mounted troops reconnoitred as far as Rahami Cataract, and Colville camped on Ukumtata Island, three miles above, where many of the channels between the islands were dry enough for his troops to pass.

On the 29th a reconnaissance showed that the enemy were found to be intrenched for a distance of half a mile at Birti parallel to the river, so as to be able to fire on the boats. Their numbers were estimated at from 2000 to 3000. Consequently on its arrival at the foot of the rapids one battalion was ordered to disembark, and to march to the top of the bank, and establish itself there, so as to protect the passage of boats. The next battalion having brought its boats safely up, was to protect the passage of the first, and so on.

Then came the news of the advance of the desert column, the intrenchment at Gubat, the appearance of Gordon's steamers, the advance of reinforcements of the enemy from Berber to Metammeh, and the serious condition of Sir Herbert Stewart; but General Buller, who was to take command at Gubat, sent the message, "If Khartûm is sufficiently provisioned we don't mean to do anything until you join us." This made it necessary to push on to Birti, but a spy had reported to Colonel Colville that reinforcements of the enemy had arrived from Berber, and the reconnoitring party had pushed to within a mile of Birti, where they thought there were evidences of a preparation to advance. At daybreak on the 30th a native dressed in white, who on the previous night had appeared within a few yards of the seriba leading a horse, surrendered himself. He had been an Egyptian soldier, one of the Berber garrison who had been compelled to join the Mahdi's troops to go to Birti under the command of Lekalik, and had deserted with a horse belonging to Moussa Wad Abu Hegel, and carried a rifle and ammunition. He declared that there were 5000 Monassir, 4000 Robatab, and 6000 Bishareen and Berberines in the enemy's camp, but only 300 rifles and thirty rounds of ammunition per rifle, and that the spiked gun from Stewart's steamer was there. It was then determined to march upon Birti if a way could be found, and General Brackenbury, with

Colonel Butler, Colonel Colville, Major Slade, and the deserter went out with the mounted troops into the desert to a hill at about six miles' distance from which they could see a dry water-course or wady leading to the enemy's camp, but nothing was to be seen of the enemy. In the evening another deserter came in and said that the birds had flown because of a report that an attack would be made on them both from the desert and the right bank of the river. The enemy (about 1500 this time) had marched towards Salamat to occupy the Shukook Pass.

The mudir's vakeel accompanying the troops on the right bank had been promised a large reward if he could secure Suleiman Wad Gamr and the blind chief who had caused the murder of Colonel Stewart, and he now reported that Suleiman's uncle had come in and asked for an assurance that he and the rest of his tribe might be received without being punished. To this the vakeel had replied that neither they nor Suleiman himself should come to harm. He considered that this was an excellent way of going to work, as Suleiman might be induced to come in by a promise of safety which there was no reason whatever to keep; and on being assured that no such assurance would be made, but that the murderers would certainly be hanged if they were caught, neither he nor Gaudet, the Turkish commander, could, for some time, believe that such a chance would be abandoned because it was to be brought about by treachery.

That afternoon Suleiman fled, and Colonel Butler reported that he had entered Birti and found it deserted. General Earle then rode on till he reached the place, and there discovered on the shore the boat that had belonged to the ill-fated steamer. It was then that Husscin, the man who declared himself to have been the stoker of the steamer, came up and told the story of the wreck and the murder.[1] He had been taken prisoner by Omar, Suleiman's uncle, who had made him a slave; and he was now so anxious to return to his native place in Upper Egypt that he contrived to escape on learning that he would be detained for the purpose of pointing out the site of the murder at Hebbeh.

[1] Vol. iii. p. 246.

On searching the houses in the village a large number of papers were found, and also some remains of articles that had evidently belonged to Colonel Stewart and his party. Among these were portions of French and English books, part of a field boot, the damaged face and battered case of an aneroid barometer which General Brackenbury afterwards ascertained had been purchased only an hour or two before Stewart left Charing Cross with General Gordon. These were all found in Suleiman Wad Gamr's house.

It was uncertain whether Suleiman had fled to Berber, but the report was that Lekalik and Moussa were holding the Shukook Pass while Suleiman collected his cattle, after which the chief would retire. Colonel Butler pushed forward, and mounted troops patrolled the country for six miles to the spot where Butler had fixed on a site for a camp, where there was forage, good ground for cavalry, and clear water to Birti. The country all around was uncultivated, stony, and broken, but Birti itself was a green spot in that wilderness of ugly rocks through which the troops had been making their weary way since leaving Belal. On the high fertile island opposite, as well as on the mainland, the growing crops were plentiful, the sakyehs in workable order, and some grain was found, either in the houses or buried in pits in the neighbourhood. Major-general Brackenbury says in his account: "The enemy's camp had been situated on uncultivated ground some distance below (down stream of) the village of Birti itself. A semicircle of low rocky hills surrounded it, the ends of the semicircle resting on the river. In the midst of it there was a low rocky eminence; and on this, on the slopes of the hills, and on the flat ground below, the dervishes had constructed their shelters of boughs of trees and straw mats. One of the most curious features of the camp was the number of places of prayer, of large size, prepared on spaces of flat ground by clearing away all stones, carefully marked by lines of stones, with the same point towards the east, with which we are all familiar on oriental prayer-carpets. Judging by my experience of native camps built in a similar way in Ashanti, I should say there had been from 1500

to 2000 men encamped here. We could see where the tents of the three chiefs had been, and the stables of their horses. Nothing of any value was found in the camp; a few cooking-pots, walking-sticks, one or two pieces of wood with verses from the Koran written on them, some inferior straw mats, were all that we could find. No arms of any kind were discovered, but a thousand rounds of Remington ammunition were found in one of the houses. The broad wady by which we had purposed to march to the attack led directly round the back of the camp to the cultivated ground behind, and had wide, easy passages leading right into the heart of the camp."

It was very disappointing to find that the enemy had fled, the more so as it was now evident that they might continue to retire from place to place, and it would be impossible for the column to come up with them. At that time the Black Watch was struggling in the Rahami Cataract, where the head of the battalion had been for three days, and not a boat had reached Birti. Before they concentrated at Birti on the 4th of February they had been four days in the seven miles of cataract, working from dawn to dusk, and had lost one man drowned, and two boats. The Cornwalls were then still in the same cataract. The Gordons had passed through that of Kab-el-Abd. It was weary work, and the Black Watch and Staffords having been sent on to Castle Camp, the place selected by Colonel Butler beyond Birti, General Earle made arrangements for the later comers to move forward immediately on their arrival, and Colonel Colville was therefore ordered to instruct the vakeel to cross the river with the mudir's troops and to occupy the country during the advance of the column to Berber, and to be ready on the 6th to advance with an escort to Salamat that he might accompany the head-quarters, and assist in collecting information. Colville was also to cross the river and to bring the uncles of Suleiman, who were still with the vakeel, and some other sheikhs who had surrendered and were to be kept with our force as hostages for the good behaviour of their people, who were in the country which the column was about to leave.

The vakeel, who had been having not at all a bad time, but lived in a comfortable tent with rugs and cushions, and contrived to obtain coffee and other agreeable palliatives, was by no means disposed to go further. He sent word that he was tired, that the mudir would expect him to collect taxes at Hamdab, that it would have a much better effect if he and his troops remained where they were and prevented the reoccupation of the country by the Monassir, beside which he did not know the country near Salamat. His representation that he could not possibly start till the 8th, and that his going would be useless, was again urged at an interview with the general, which he held after crossing the river on purpose; and at last a compromise was made to the effect that he should immediately bring over his troops and occupy Birti. He took with him Abu-Bekr, Suleiman Wad Gamr's uncle, and Wad-el-Turki, a Shagiyeh partisan of the Mahdi, Omar, the other relation of Suleiman Wad Gamr, having run away. These relatives were believed to have a blood feud with Suleiman; but a letter from the murderer of Colonel Stewart had been found upon Abu-Bekr, urging him to attend a council and speaking of the disposal of the captives from the steamer, a letter which was not allowed to incriminate him, as he had come in on a promise of safety and had certainly not participated in the actual crime.

The whole of the property, houses, palm-trees, and sakyehs, belonging to Suleiman Wad Gamr, his uncle Omar, and other notorious rebels at Birti were destroyed, the Cornwalls completing the work of just vengeance after the Staffords and the Black Watch had gone forward to Camp Castle. About 250 date-palms were either hewn down or burned.

A large quantity of grain and flour had been discovered by the commissariat, so that horses and natives were fully rationed for above a month, and there was also six tons of wheat as a reserve. This was most fortunate, as both natives and our own soldiers had already consented to very limited rations of what may be called the comparative luxuries, including salt, sugar, and vinegar, and there was some fear lest, the supplies of forage ceasing beyond Birti, the grain for the cattle and the flour for the natives would

be exhausted, especially as nothing had been obtained between Hamdab and Birti except such forage as would be found for camels and horses in the cultivated patches. The people had buried their grain in the desert and had driven off their cattle. They would not bring in any kind of provisions for sale, and could not be induced to enter the service of the column as paid labourers.

The column had practically reached some miles beyond Birti. Colonel Butler had reconnoitred in the direction of the Shukook Pass, and, six or seven miles further than the place where he had fixed the camp, had ascended a range of hills near the upper end of the large island of Dulka, the highest point being situated on another island.

On the morning of the 5th of February Colonel Butler was told not to advance the boats further than the Castle Camp until the two channels beyond that place had been thoroughly examined, and Lieutenant-colonel Alleyne had discovered which was least dangerous and where the best spots for camping might be found. All was being prepared for a prompt and yet a safe prosecution of the march to Abu-Hamed. A boy wearing the Mahdi's uniform, and who had deserted from the rebel camp at Shukook, was sent to Colonel Butler to act as guide to the pass. The officers with head-quarters at Birti were only awaiting the report of that day's reconnaissance when a cipher telegram arrived from General Wood, who was acting as chief of the staff at Korti in the absence of Sir R. Buller. It was dated on the previous day (Feb. 4) at 8.50 P.M. and said, "I am ordered by Lord Wolseley to inform you that to his deep regret Khartûm was found by Wilson to be in possession of enemy. Wilson in returning was wrecked, but steamer has gone for him, and there is no apparent danger for him. You are to halt where you are until further orders."

It may be imagined with what grief the generals in command of the river column read this message, with what anxiety they awaited those further orders, which might indicate immediate recall and the end of the expedition after so many difficulties had been surmounted and when the enemy was probably within striking distance. They could only conclude that Gordon had been slain

and that Lord Wolseley was, like themselves, suffering the pain and mortification of personal sorrow and the conviction that all the efforts which had been made were ineffectual; that the primary object of an arduous campaign, the conditions of which were unparalleled in the history of modern warfare, had been frustrated, and that the declarations that had been made of the intention of the expedition would necessitate the abandonment of Khartûm and the withdrawal of our forces from any further attempt to vindicate the authority of the khedive in these western provinces of the Soudan, whatever might be done for the protection of the Red Sea territory and the occupation of Suakim and the eastern borders. The painful intelligence was not made known, however. General Earle and General Brackenbury kept it secret, and the cause of the immediate orders to halt could only be surmised by the other officers.

Before the receipt of the telegram a message had been sent to Lord Wolseley describing the position of the troops at Birti, the preparations for further advance, and the probable movements of the enemy; and he was informed that, though the route was exceedingly difficult both by land and water, a tangled mass of rocks quite unsuited for mounted troops, and affording neither good anchorage nor good ground for bivouacs, no resistance was anticipated on that side Abu-Hamed, so that the column would push on as rapidly as possible consistently with necessary precautions.

To Colonel Rundle at Korosko an intimation had been sent that the march beyond Birti had commenced, and that not only materials for repairing the boats and shoeing the horses would be required, but clothing for the troops. The trousers of the men and those of many of the officers were so worn as to be in tatters and beyond much mending. A prolonged halt would, it was discovered, present even more difficulties than an immediate advance. A message to the chief of the staff at Korti on the 8th of February stated the result of the estimate that had been made during the three days' occupation of Birti. The strength of the forces was 2966 officers and men drawing rations. A further large quantity

of grain had been discovered by foraging parties, so that there was enough for thirty days for the 140 horses, but none for the 580 camels, who, having eaten the green forage, would, in case of a prolonged stay, have little food supply. One of the great needs was a further supply of soap; for many of the boats were infested with vermin, the lice of Egypt, which were already in the clothes of the men. On the 6th General Earle rode over to the Castle Camp and imparted to Colonel Butler the contents of the telegram. On that day the whole of the troops were allowed to rest after the fortnight's toil which they had undergone, and they took the opportunity to wash their clothes and to attempt to patch the parti-coloured rags they were wearing as trousers. Either here or on the former Nile journey a patch made of a portion of a sardine tin was observed on one of the men. In the next two days the troops were busy improving the sanitary condition of the camps, providing for the supply of water, and exercising the camels, who were getting out of condition for want of their accustomed work. Preparations were made for the possible return journey; but on the other hand news came that the enemy from Shukook had advanced to Kirbekan, that they were less than a thousand in number and had about 150 rifles, and had taken up this position as one from which it would be more easy to escape in case of defeat. Lord Wolseley was waiting a reply from the government. The alleged reason for despatching the Nile force had been the rescue of General Gordon and the relief of Khartûm, and that result could not now be attained. Should it have been made at all? Should it not have been made earlier and with a larger army? Had the opinions expressed by Gordon himself, that the route could be opened from Suakim to Berber, been fatally neglected? These were current questions, amidst which disputants were agreed on the one bitter conclusion, that in spite of the undaunted courage and patient determination of our troops, by which difficulties apparently insurmountable had been overcome, and notwithstanding the extraordinary fertility of resource displayed by the officers, the expedition had failed to achieve the end for which it had been organized. Would the government think it consistent

with their previous assertions to give orders to complete the secondary purpose for which the columns had crossed the desert and threaded the intricate passages of the Nile cataracts? Would Berber be delivered and Abu-Hamed occupied, that the united army might strike down the power of the Mahdi by the junction at Berber of the Nile column, the reserve army, and the force now under the command of General Buller at Gubat, while, at the same time, the hordes in the Eastern Soudan would be defeated by the troops who were concentrating there to crush Osman Digma and to open up the route between Suakim and Berber?

"Lord Wolseley is communicating with government as to future operations, but he wishes you to push on to Abu-Hamed and await further orders there." This was the telegram received by General Earle at 8 o'clock on the morning of Sunday the 8th of February.

Not a moment then was to be lost. The programme might be carried out after all, and the right to punish might be vindicated though the power to save had not been timely exercised. All was activity at Birti, to which the Gordons were immediately to proceed; while the Staffords, protected by mounted troops, were to advance from Castle Camp and to be followed by the rest of the troops when the obstacles presented by the rapids had been more carefully inspected. At Castle Camp the men in their red coats had just returned from church parade when General Brackenbury rode over with the order to go forward, and within half an hour the first boats had put off and the cavalry were scouting on the bank: Colonel Butler commanding the advanced guard after having instructed Colonel Eyre to make a camp on Dulka Island.

Colonel Butler with Major Hood and a score of Hussars going forward on the left bank, came close to the enemy, who were occupying the stony ground that had been patrolled by our men three days before. They were posted on rocky clumps or knolls commanding the track by which the cavalry were advancing. A few sharp volleys from our men drove them away from the posts to the tops and sides of the hillocks. Later in the day

two of the exploring boats landed crews and repeated the fire: but there appeared to be few rifles with the enemy, who apparently numbered about 200, chiefly armed with spears. The position occupied by the enemy was about two miles from Eyre's camp on Dulka Island, to which the two boats fell back just before sunset, Colonel Butler retiring to Castle Camp, the enemy following as far as the most advanced position which had been held by his men.

The river was between the position of the Arabs and Eyre's camp, and the Staffords could reach the spot where the rocky knolls had been held in about two hours, and the Black Watch could be brought from Castle Camp to the same spot in six hours. Colonel Butler proposed that the Staffords should land next day and that they should be covered with his mounted troops; as the battalion moved to the left bank the Black Watch was to be brought to the same place. He asked for two guns at Castle Camp, as the right and the rear of the enemy were within range of Dulka Island, and guns taken across by boat and carried about two miles along the island could take the position in reverse.

On the morning of the 9th, the mudir's troops crossed and bivouacked opposite their former camp. They were to hold the Monassir country and to forward supplies of cattle and grain. Soon after landing they found the mountain gun that had been taken from Colonel Stewart's steamer, but it was spiked, and most of its appurtenances were missing.

The mounted troops had occupied with their advanced posts the rocky knolls[1] which they had reached the day before. The enemy still retained their position, which General Earle himself reconnoitred from the rocks occupied by the cavalry vedettes about 800 yards distant. This position, which was to be the scene of the battle, was, in fact, the same as that patrolled by Colonel Butler when he ascended the hill to reconnoitre. The rocky hills directly in front of our troops and 50 to 80 feet high were held by the enemy, whose right was directly over the river. Between two of these eminences was the road from Birti to

[1] These are called "koppies" in South Africa, and therefore General Brackenbury gave them that name in his telegram of the fight at Kirbekan, and the name was retained.

Salamat, and as breastworks of stone had been built up among the rocks, the Arab rifles could have swept both the road and the river. From this position they would have to be entirely dislodged before the column could advance towards Abu-Hamed. Even with the series of knolls, and about 600 yards behind them to the left rear of the enemy, was the ridge before-mentioned, about 300 feet high and ending suddenly about 600 yards from the river. Its slope was as steep as the side of a glacier, and at the summit was a ridge of white marble rocks, described by General Brackenbury as projecting like the teeth from the jawbone of a skeleton. Along this summit men with flags and spears were moving among the rocks. These two positions of the enemy were apparently only outposts, perhaps capable of holding not more than 300 or 400 men, and the main body was probably behind the hills waiting to come out on the advance of our troops to attack them.

If it would be possible to move the right of our force under cover of the broken ground and march quite round the ridge (the same ridge which had been climbed by Colonel Butler on the 5th) our troops might then move round its rear and attack both it and the rocky hillocks. A wide detour made by Colonel Butler's reconnoitring party showed that the position could be turned by a march through a broad sandy wady, and that this wady could be approached by a road from our camp. It was, therefore, decided that preparations should be made for an immediate attack.

The attack was to be made next morning (the 10th). By sunset on the 9th the Staffords with two sections of the field hospital, the head-quarters, and seven companies of the Black Watch had reached their bivouac scarcely a mile from the enemy's position. Some of the troops—the wing of the Cornwalls and one company of the Black Watch—who had been struggling with the difficulties of the Nile channels, were still at Castle Camp; but there was no time to be lost. The infantry baggage was to be packed in the boats, the rest of the baggage with the baggage animals to be packed on the shore in front of the boats. The boat of the royal navy with its gatling-gun, commanded by Lieutenant-colonel Eden, was to be ready to sweep the shore and the river up

stream. The Staffords in red coats and the Highlanders in kilts were to breakfast and be on parade by seven o'clock, fully equipped with one day's rations, water, and ammunition, with reserve ammunition carried by camels for them and for the guns; stretchers and bearers for the wounded, and a detachment of the field hospital with two camels carrying water. Lieutenant-colonel Alleyne was to be in command of two companies of the Staffords and the two guns, and was to occupy the rocky knolls held on the previous day by the cavalry outposts, and to hold the enemy in check in front, attracting their attention during the flank movement.

In the afternoon a telegram had come from Lord Wolseley:— "The government have decided that the Mahdi's power at Khartûm must be overthrown. This most probably means a campaign here next cold weather, and certainly the detention in the Soudan of all troops now here. A strong force of all arms goes as soon as possible to crush Osman Digma. We must now take Berber. Buller will now take Metammeh. Let me know early the date you calculate upon reaching Berber, so that Buller's force may co-operate with you."

Three hours later a letter in cipher from Lord Wolseley to General Earle dated 7th February came in. It contained a fuller account of the communication between Lord Wolseley and the government. The rescue of Colonel Wilson by Sir Charles Beresford's steamer had not then been heard of at Korti. The letter said, "I congratulate you upon the progress you have made, although I am naturally very sorry the enemy have not tested the temper of your steel. However, let us hope their courage may be stiffened by the fall of Khartûm and that you may strike them hard before you reach Berber." The night passed without an alarm. General Earle and General Brackenbury sat up late talking over Lord Wolseley's letter and discussing the position. The question was whether the enemy would again retreat before the attack could be made. At daylight, however, the cavalry vedettes reported that they were still in position. The men paraded eager for the fray. Lieutenant Eden's company of the Black Watch were set to work to form a small seriba, and when

this was completed Alleyne's two companies and guns marched off to occupy the ground left by the cavalry outposts, and at half-past seven the column started, the Staffords leading, the Black Watch following, with field hospital and camels between the two, and with orders to move with the left column. The formation was designed to enable each column to take advantage of the easiest ground for marching, and to be ready to close so as to form square or oblong, with stretcher bearers and camels inside.

Through a broad wady of loose sand the farthest edge of the jagged ridge was reached. The part of the column had been covered by the cavalry, Colonel Butler leading; the left flank by the Egyptian camel corps, lining the edge of the broken ground opposite to the high ridge. The column marched round the eastern end of the ridge, and, turning sharp to the left, passed through a rocky valley in the direction of the river with the ridge to the left with a low rocky range running at right angles to it. From the high ridge a sharp fire was opened on the column, and some of the Staffords were left to engage the enemy there while the column advanced by a valley amidst rocky eminences, also occupied by the rifles of the enemy. Two companies of Colonel Eyre's regiment were sent to take the high ridge by its western shoulder, and under a heavy fire they climbed about a third of the way up the shoulder to a clump of rocks which gave them some shelter. While two companies of the Black Watch moved to the river bank to prevent escape in that direction, and to clear the rocky mounds near the river, the remaining Black Watch and Staffords advanced and swung round to the left to face the stony hills from which the fire was directed, and by a succession of rushes and with well-directed volleys they advanced from point to point till they reached some rocks not more than 400 yards distant from the series of knolls where the enemy was in position. Between them and our men there was now only open ground swept by the fire of the Arabs, and while the two companies of the Black Watch first mentioned, and a company of Staffords who had accompanied them had advanced along the bank and taken the rocky height nearest to the river,

driving out the enemy at the point of the bayonet, and at once bringing a flanking fire to bear on the other "koppies," a body of the enemy armed with spears and with a man in their midst carrying a flag, boldly descended from the heights to the open ground and charged towards the nearest companies of the Black Watch, only to be received with a terrible fire which swept away those in front, and caused the rest to turn and run for the river. Then the order for the assault rang out, the shrill skreel of the pipes was heard above the sharp rattle of rifles and the hoarse murmur of the battle-cry, and the Black Watch charged over the clear space and stormed the rocky knolls, not stopping till they had reached the highest points, while the men on the high "koppie" by the river bank advanced from the flank and seized the height nearest to them. It was one of the most gallant assaults ever made, for the enemy were ensconced behind loop-holed breastworks, and hidden in the clefts of the steep, rugged hills, which were difficult to scale in the face of a continuous fire; but our men never wavered, never stopped till they had taken these two main positions. The Arabs remained fighting stubbornly to the last: not even those who were concealed in the holes and sconces of the rocks being suffered to escape.

But it was necessary to call the men to form again in regular order, and General Earle had decided to bring them into their ranks on a small, level space between the two principal hills, where there stood a hut built of stone with a roof of thatch. General Earle, who was directing the formation of the ranks, was standing within a few yards of this hut when a sergeant of the Black Watch pointed out that it was occupied by some of the enemy, who had just shot one of our men. General Earle ordered the thatch to be set on fire; but on being warned that there was ammunition in the hut, ordered the roof to be pulled down, and went towards the spot. General Brackenbury, who was close to him, said, "Take care, sir, the hut is full of men." Our soldiers had set fire to the roof, and General Brackenbury's attention was for a moment diverted by seeing a native who had rushed out of a side door instantly bayoneted. At that

moment General Earle fell, shot through the head from a small square window in the hut, close to which he had approached. He lived only for a few minutes afterwards, tended by Lieutenant St. Aubyn and Surgeon-major Harvey; and General Brackenbury at this critical moment had to take command.

There was but a short pause for the first expression of sorrow at the loss of the chief. The men had still to be brought together for the work that lay before them, and General Brackenbury, having ordered two companies of the Black Watch to remain as a picket on the hills that had been taken, sent to assemble the Staffords, when the terrible message was brought to him that the two companies of these men, who, earlier in the action, had attempted to take the high ridge, had failed to reach a higher point than the cluster of rocks, where they had found some shelter at about a third of the way up; that Colonel Eyre, who was in command, lay there shot through the heart; that Captain Horsbrugh and Lieutenant Colborne had been severely wounded; that a number of men had been killed or seriously injured; that there were only four rounds of ammunition per man left, and that this had been reserved as the enemy was still holding the ridge. General Brackenbury at once directed four companies of the Black Watch to form a reserve at the foot of the hills, and, sending for Lieutenant-colonel Beale, who now succeeded to the command of the Staffords, instructed him to take the remainder of his regiment, and, with the help of the company which had been left to watch the hill early in the day, to reinforce the troops who were already there and assault and take the position. This was done. The Staffords went boldly up the steep side of the hill, and with a succession of rushing charges made their way to the summit and bayoneted the Arabs, who, like their companions on the koppies, fought desperately to the last.

It had been a day of sheer hard fighting, and all who were engaged had deserved high praise, including the Egyptian Camel Corps, who, under Major Marriott, had protected the flank of the infantry on its advance, and from their position in front of the high ridge had kept up a fire upon the heights. One Egyptian soldier

had charged up the hill alone when the Staffords stormed it. He, at all events, was an exception, or rather, he perhaps afforded a proof that the "hens" gather courage when they are led and supported by Europeans. Leaving the two companies of the Black Watch on the koppies and sending two companies to bivouac on a high island of the Nile at the head of the rapid, General Brackenbury ordered the remaining troops back to camp. Colonel Buller with his handful of hussars had early in the day proceeded to the river bank and thence to the entrance of the Shukook Pass, and in the rugged gorge had found the deserted camp of the enemy with standards, camels, and donkeys, with some of which, without any casualities caused by the fire of the enemy from the adjacent hills, he returned to the camp.

The fight at Kirbekan had lasted for five hours, and throughout that time the hospital service had been admirably accomplished; dressing stations had been established at various points, and the medical officers had accompanied their men into action though both they and the wounded were unavoidably much exposed to the cross-fire during the engagement, at the close of which the bodies of General Earle, Colonel Eyre, and Colonel Coveney were carried into camp, while those of the other brave men who had fallen were committed to a grave on the river bank.

At sunset, an appropriate hour for a ceremony so sad and solemn, the bodies of General Earle, Colonel Eyre, and Colonel Coveney were laid side by side in deep graves near the foot of a solitary palm-tree amidst a silence scarcely disturbed except by the low boom of the minute-guns echoed from the dreary hills where the battle had been fought.

But the word was still "Onward," onward to Berber; and immediate arrangements were made by General Brackenbury to advance the troops which had more recently arrived and had not been engaged at Kirbekan, and to push through the Shukook Pass to Salamat and to Hebbeh, the scene of the murder of Colonel Stewart and his companions, where further punishment was to be inflicted by the destruction of the village and of the property of Fakri Wad Etman, the accomplice of Suleiman Wad Gamr.

The cost of the victory at Kirbekan was heavy. General Earle, Colonel Eyre, Colonel Coveney, and nine men killed; four officers and forty-four men wounded, of whom three men of the Staffords died two days afterwards. Captain Lord Avonmore also afterwards succumbed to enteric fever, caused by excessive exertion in the engagement and constant exposure to the sun. To receive his body a fourth grave was made under the palm-tree, and he was laid beside his brother officers, who were buried on the evening of the battle. Sixty-one lost from a force of twelve hundred.

The fight at Kirbekan had, however, proved that our men could meet the Arabs, not only by forming in square and repelling their furious charges, but in open order and even when the enemy was in a position which might be regarded as almost impregnable when held by a few determined troops. General Brackenbury thought that there were about 800 of the Arabs holding the rocky hills and the ridge when the attack commenced, and that half of these escaped before the attack commenced, and a few more when the fight had commenced; but that the rest fought desperately to the last. Sixty lay dead on the two main hills, sixty-five on the ridge, a number more below, while there must have been more concealed from view, and many were shot in attempting to swim across the river. The total loss was computed at 200. Among them were many of the leaders of the rebellion; Abuhegel, Ali Wad Hussein, Hamid Wad Lekalik, brother of Abdel Megid, and Abou Lekalik being reported to have fallen. Suleiman Wad Gamr was not present at the fight, having gone to Suleiman to collect his belongings and take them into Berber.

In the account sent to Lord Wolseley the general said:—"Our troops having turned them out of these positions must have a great effect on the spirit of the enemy. I sincerely trust it may prevent our having to fight our way to Abu-Hamed, as, if we have many such fights as to-day we shall be seriously embarrassed how to carry on our wounded. If it enables us to pass the Shukook Pass, which is still before us, and to get through the rapids ahead without more fighting, it will, indeed, be a valuable day for us."

The wounded were reported to be, on the whole, doing w and it certainly seemed as though the air of the Soudan, notwi standing its variations of temperature, was favourable to t recovery of our men. Already the wounded from Gubat a Abu-Klea were arriving at Korti, whence on the 12th of Febru Lord Wolseley telegraphed:—"First convoy of wounded j arrived. Nine officers and thirty-four non-commissioned offic and men. I have visited all of them, and found them in the b spirits and looking very healthy, the desert air having done th much good. All anxious to be well again, and to have anotl fight with enemy."

At about the same time an official report was made of t passage which the whole moving force had made up the N above Wady Halfa to Korti.

General Buller and Colonel Brackenbury, before they had bo gone forward with their expedition, had made inspection of tl force, and at that time had estimated that the total loss fro drowning had not exceeded eighteen men, and that the averag loss of boats was not more than three per regiment, an astoi ishingly low figure considering the difficulties and danger of th cataracts and rapids which the boats had to surmount.

A boat, the *Lotus*, had at that time arrived at Korti with cargo from the lower Nile, whence she had made a rapid passage and was to return at once with sick to the hospitals, so tha regular arrangements were made for the conveyance of th invalids towards Cairo. At the date of the operations of th Nile column Lord Wolseley had issued a special general orde as to the progress and conduct of the boats, saying that th following battalions, in the order named, had completed th journey from Sarras to Debbeh in the quickest time:—First, th Royal Irish; second, the Gordon Highlanders; third, the Wes Kent. The second division of the naval brigade, under Lieu tenant van Roughnet, the Royal Irish, and the West Kent particularly distinguished themselves by the excellent order ir which they brought up the boats and supplies. The seconc division of the naval brigade and Captain Forster's company

of the Royal Irish had handed over the stores intrusted to them in complete order as received, nothing being either damaged or missing.

Lord Wolseley congratulated the Royal Irish regiment on having won the small prize offered to them as a mark of his personal appreciation of the toils which all had undergone. He hoped that, as they had been first on the river, so they would be among the first to enter Khartûm.

The general recognized fully the gratifying way in which all the battalions under his command had worked, and warmly thanked both officers and men for the untiring spirit they had exhibited in overcoming the serious obstacles they had to encounter. All had worked cheerfully under severe privations, and continued and arduous toil, and Lord Wolseley said he would have pleasure in bringing their energy and discipline under the notice of her Majesty.

## CHAPTER IX.

Our Army at Suakim. Forces under Sir Gerald Graham. Loyalty of the Colonies. The Patriotic Advances of Australia and Canada. New South Wales to the Front. The Hon. William Bede Dalley and his Friends. Public Spirit. The Australian Contingent for Egypt. Excitement in the Colonies. Departure of the Troops from Sydney. Retirement of General Buller from Gubat. Recall of the Nile Column. Return of Troops to Korti. The Latest Accounts of Gordon and Khartûm.

There was no longer any doubt that a considerable force would be sent to Suakim to oppose the gathering horde of savage Hadendowas and other tribesmen, who were ready to fight under the command of Osman Digma, who was collecting his forces at Tamanieb. It was known that the construction of the much-contested railway from Suakim to Berber was to be again attempted. Light infantry had been ordered from Gibraltar to Egypt. Bengal and Bombay native infantry and Bengal cavalry had been selected at Bombay for service in the Soudan. The Shropshire Regiment were to go in the transport *Deccan* from Malta. The Indian contingent to be sent to the Soudan was to number 2600 men, including 500 sabres; and the Indian government at Calcutta had received orders to send a brigade. At Cairo a second battalion of mounted infantry 200 strong was formed for service at Suakim. In London and at the various depôts and dockyards all was excitement as the preparations for sending a strong contingent were pressed forward. There was a sound of war in the air, for Russian generals and their troops were skulking on the Afghan frontier, and the czar, as usual, was prepared either to bully, to lie, or to temporize according to circumstances. There were more reasons than one for preparing to call out our reserves and to organize our resources; but the immediate cause was the apparent determination of the government to make a late and hasty stride for the purpose of opening the route to Berber in the event of the desert column and the Nile column meeting, and General Lord Wolseley joining them with his forces and taking the command against Khartûm.

A supplementary estimate of the amount that would be required during the year ending March 31, 1885, to meet additional expenditure for ordinary services and for military operations in the Soudan was issued, the sum required being £942,000. The amount was made up as follows:—general staff and regimental charges (including gratuity for operations in the Soudan, 1883-84), £50,000; medical establishments and services, £22,000; militia pay and allowances, £10,000; commissariat, transport, and ordnance-store establishments, wages, &c., £20,000; provisions, forage, field allowances, transport, and other services, £270,000; clothing establishments, services and supplies, £40,000; supply, manufacture, and repair of warlike and other stores (including £30,000 for armaments for coaling stations abroad), £315,000; works and buildings (chiefly for railway, piers, water supply, and hut accommodation at Suakim; also £5000 for defences of coaling stations abroad), £235,000; and miscellaneous effective services, £5000.

Orders were received at Aldershot to form a second additional semi-permanent telegraph section immediately for service in the Soudan, partly composed of postal volunteers and reserve engineers; and the government contractors received additional orders for the construction of hospital huts for the Soudan campaign.

Reports from Suakim showed that up to the 6th of February the enemy had been making repeated night attacks on Suakim. Colonel Chermside was there or at Massowa (where the Italians were soon afterwards established), and all the coast was said to be in the hands of Osman Digma. The friendly tribes were active in their opposition to him and his followers, and on the 18th of January actually looted fifty-seven camels at Tamai and took them into Suakim on the following day; but the rebels followed in force, and were only kept off by the guns at the works and on the ships. At that time there was nightly firing, and it was evident that the power of Osman was increasing, though after the 6th of February, when it was reported that his followers were excited and alarmed by the report of the advance of the English by the Nile and the desert, the attacks on the town ceased.

By the 12th of February the news of Gordon's death and the fall of Khartûm had reached Canada; at the same date it had reached Sydney, Victoria, and Adelaide, and was soon known throughout the Australian colonies.

As early as November, 1884, there had been some tentative offers from our Canadian brethren to send a force to join the army in the Soudan, and now similar offers of immediate participation in our efforts for the suppression of the Mahdi and his lieutenant Osman Digma, were coming from our brethren in Australasia.

These offers represented aid which, when combined, would have been by no means insignificant. The forces in the colonies which were waiting the answer of our government amounted to some 50,000 men; and if it had come to a question of defence against a really formidable enemy, of course these numbers could have been greatly increased. The Canadian militia had been vastly augmented since the act which followed federation. Canada was said to have a total of 37,000 men of all arms, raised by twelve militia districts; while a number of military schools trained a fair supply of officers. The latest report of the general commanding-in-chief represented the forces as improving in efficiency. Australia, with a total population that must have passed three millions, needs fewer men under arms, having no common frontier with another state. New South Wales counted a little over 2000, costing £85,000 annually; Victoria had about 3500, of which over 400 were naval; and when the reorganization was complete it was reckoned that she would possess thirteen war vessels, including four cruisers and three torpedo boats. The other Australasian colonies were defended in like manner, New Zealand presenting a total effective of not much less than 6000—a large force, which was necessary on account of the presence of the Maoris, who, though at that time friendly, could not be ignored in the military calculations of the colony. Then there was the Cape, which required a considerable force for its own defence, and could show a total of between 4000 and 5000 regulars and volunteers. We could not look to the South African colonies, however, which had quite enough to do to provide for possible troubles on their own

borders. But without reckoning this group of colonies, the remainder was seen to possess very considerable military resources, a review of which was calculated to increase our respect for the native vigour, the self-dependence, and the organizing power of the colonists.

On November 25, 1884, Lord Lansdowne, Governor-general of Canada, had communicated to Lord Derby an application by Major-general Laurie for active employment with any Canadian force that might be raised for service in Egypt. The war office, in reply, stated that there was no intention to organize such a force. The offer was renewed on February 7, General Laurie, Colonel Arthur Williams, and others, undertaking to raise forces. The war office, however, again declined the offers.

On February 12 Lord Augustus Loftus, Governor of New South Wales, telegraphed the offer of the Colonial government of infantry and artillery, to be landed at Suakim in thirty days. In subsequent telegrams it was mentioned that the colony would defray all expenses. Lord Derby telegraphed on February 14 accepting the offer with satisfaction. Other offers from Victoria, Queensland, and South Australia were contained in subsequent despatches from the governors of the respective colonies. On February 20 Lord Derby telegraphed to Sir W. Robinson, Governor of South Australia, requesting him to communicate to the other colonies her Majesty's high appreciation of their patriotic offers, explaining the reasons which induced the government to accept the offer of New South Wales, and observing that if operations were prolonged till the autumn they would take the offers into consideration.

The New South Wales government offered two batteries of artillery and an effective disciplined battalion of infantry 500 strong. On the 14th of February Lord Derby telegraphed that the government would accept the offer of New South Wales with much satisfaction, but that two batteries with ten guns were really more than they could make any use of in the plentitude of their own arrangements. He added that the main operations against Khartûm might be delayed until the autumn, but that if with this

knowledge the colonial government would prefer the immediate despatch of the contingent there was "no desire here to delay it." The Canadian government had, after inquiry, sanctioned recruiting for active service in Egypt or elsewhere; and the governor-general had on the 12th of February suggested that three battalions, each 500 strong, should be sent, one from the marine provinces, one from Old Canada, and one from the north-west. In reply the Canadian government was informed that its patriotic offer was highly appreciated, and would be considered if operations were prolonged into the autumn. It was at the same time pointed out that the New South Wales offer was of a different kind, and that no preference for that colony was implied in accepting its fully-equipped force. On the 17th the offer of Victoria was repeated in a perfectly definite form. It was to send 600 or 700 men fully equipped, consisting of a naval brigade and mounted infantry, the latter a peculiarly valuable arm in the circumstances. But on the 20th this, as well as the offer of South Australia and of Queensland, was declined with thanks, on the same grounds as those alleged in the case of Canada, and with similar explanations. It was feared that a certain reticence exhibited by the Earl of Derby in replying to these offers, and in what was mistakenly imagined to be a slow recognition of the enthusiastic loyalty that prompted them, would cause very great dissatisfaction in Canada, and perhaps also in South Australia, when the offers of the colonial governments there were declined. Happily, however, the reasons for hesitating in both cases were not altogether misunderstood. Should the whole force in Egypt have to go into cantonments, or seek a refuge in a specially-localized camp during the hot season, an accession of a large number of men, for whom our government would have to be responsible, would represent an additional anxiety, and it was afterwards known that our Canadian countrymen deferred their offer, or rather left it over till a later date, when it was understood that should it be accepted there would be no difficulty in raising 2000 or 3000 men in the Dominion. The agent-general for Victoria received from the Hon. James Service, premier of the colony, a telegram: "Victoria

is ready to send 600 or 700 men fully equipped, consisting of a naval brigade and mounted infantry;" and Sir Arthur Blyth, agent-general for South Australia, received from the government at Adelaide a telegram on the 16th of February, saying, Please intimate to the imperial government that South Australia offers, at her own expense, to supply 250 infantry with officers for service in the Soudan. The reasons for our government declining these offers, and yet (though tardily, it must be confessed) making some effort to express to our kin beyond the sea the deep heart-stir that their prompt and genuine good-fellowship caused among the English people were not misinterpreted. The telegram sent by the Victorian premier ended by saying, "Federal action for the formation of an Australian contingent has been suggested, and correspondence on this head is now passing between the colonies." Suggested! The message flashed along the wire might with advantage have gained some electric force on its passage, for the suggestion had run like fire, and the warm and generous pulses of our Australian countrymen were beating in unison with our own. In the forefront of the movement was the Honourable William Bede Dalley, attorney-general of New South Wales, who in the absence through illness of the premier, the Honourable Alexander Stuart, was acting as colonial secretary. With an energy and enthusiasm which would have commanded a warm response even under less earnest and eager conditions of loyalty and genuine love for the mother country, he had already stirred the kindling ardour of the Australasian colonies, and on the 17th February sent to London the message: "Munificent contributions from colonists in favour of Patriotic Fund daily being made; numbers of wealthy colonists offer £1000 a year while colonial contingent is engaged. Contingent leaves March 3, consisting of 212 artillerymen, 200 horses, and 522 infantry."

The idea of forming an Australian contingent to help the British forces in the Soudan had doubtless been entertained some time before the offer was made and the preparations had commenced; but the first public expression of it was attributed to Sir Edward Strickland, who had been long associated with the colony

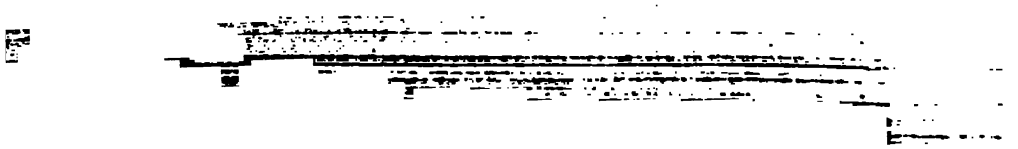
of New South Wales, and who was himself a military officer in days when there was no organized colonial force. He was well acquainted with the intensity of public feeling in the colony, especially after the departure of Gordon for Khartûm, when every item of news from Egypt and the Soudan was discussed with keen interest; and when the intelligence of Gordon's death reached Sydney Sir Edward wrote a letter which was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, in which he pointed out that a grand opportunity was then offered to Australia of proving, by a graceful, a loyal, and generous act, that she yielded not to any portion of the British Empire in loyalty and affection towards the mother country. Sir Edward may be said to have preached a crusade against "the war-like brave Saracens led by the Mahdi and fighting under all the savage influences of fanaticism, . . . learning the art of modern military strategy and acquiring arms and artillery and a knowledge how to use them."

To the general sentiment evoked by the intelligence of the death of Gordon he appealed in stirring terms, and the proposal which he made that a regiment 1000 strong, composed of recruits from all the Australian colonies, should "be raised as speedily as possible and be placed at the service of her Majesty the Queen to aid her troops already engaged in bitter war both in North and South Africa, or to supply the place at home of those drilled battalions sent out to reinforce their comrades on the field," was eagerly discussed. This, however, would have demanded a considerable time for the communications between the several colonies for the purpose of organizing the force, and, as we have seen, the British government was unwilling to incur the responsibility of accepting a force which would probably reach Egypt only to be in cantonments till the cool weather enabled the army to resume operations.

The members of the New South Wales ministry had already determined to bring the offer of a contingent to an immediate issue, and on the day that Sir Edward Strickland's letter appeared an extraordinary cabinet council was held at the office of the colonial secretary to consider a minute written by Mr. Dalley on

THE HON. Wm BEDE DALLEY.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.



the subject. In this minute it was stated that Mr. Dalley had already conferred with Colonel Richardson, the colonel-commandant of the forces in New South Wales, and with Colonel Roberts, the officer commanding the N. S. W. artillery, commonly known as the Permanent Force. From Colonel Richardson he ascertained that there would be no difficulty in raising a large body of trained and efficient infantry for the proposed service from among the volunteers of the country; and from Colonel Roberts he learned that two or three batteries of permanent artillery were available for active service. Mr. Dalley also saw Mr. Yuill, the local manager of the Orient steamship company, and ascertained from him that the means of transport could be obtained. This was a prompt movement, and as promptly the proposal was unanimously approved of by the cabinet, and the following cablegram was, at noon, despatched to Sir Saul Samuel, the agent-general of the colony in London:—

"The government offer to her Majesty's government two batteries of its Permanent Field Artillery, with ten 16-lb. guns, properly horsed: also an effective and disciplined battalion of infantry 500 strong; the artillery will be under the command of Colonel Roberts, R.A.; the whole force under the command of Colonel Richardson, the commandant; and undertaking to land the force at Suakim within thirty days from embarkation. Reply at once.—W. B. DALLEY. 12th February, 1885."

The object of the government in making this offer was explained by Mr. Dalley, as to testify the readiness of the Australian colonies to give instant and practical help to the empire in its emergency, conceiving that such a course could not be without a beneficial effect upon those who, in dealing adversely with the imperial interests, fail to recognize the esteem, the sympathy, and the adherence of the colonies. Pending the receipt of an answer from the imperial government, all the necessary arrangements were put in train, so that in the event of the offer being accepted active preparations might commence at once.

It may be said that promises of large money subscriptions began to be made directly the notion of an Australian contingent

to Egypt was made public. On the same day that S
Strickland's letter appeared Mr. J. Hindson wrote to the
papers offering a contribution of £200, and, though it was a
uncertain whether the British government would accep
proposal of New South Wales, other munificent offers fol
one of the first being that of Mr. W. H. Halliday, a w
"squatter" of Brooking, who offered a contribution of
a year for as long as the Australian force was engaged in ass
the imperial army in Egypt. Many other proposals immed
followed, accompanied by encouraging letters to Mr. I
expressing sympathy and approval for the course taken b
government. Among them were letters from Mr. Daniel C
the eldest son of Sir Daniel Cooper, Bart., inclosing cheq
£1000; another from Mr. James Fairfax offering £1000 a
for three years if necessary (a subsequent letter from the
gentleman contained £1000 on behalf of his brother, Mr. I
Fairfax, who was in England); an offer of £1000 a year fro
*Evening News* to the patriotic fund, and numerous contributio
£100 and smaller sums, beside offers to supply valuable c
butions in kind. The generous impulse continued, and it
became evident that there would have been no difficult
obtaining double the number of volunteers who were sel
to form the contingent, and double the amount necessar
equip and provision them. Mr. Thomas Walker of Con
sent £1000, Mr. W. B. Levy of West Maitland wrote offe
£1000 a year to be used as Mr. Dalley might think fit;
sequently Mr. J. Dyson offered £2000 a year for two y
and the smaller sums of £100 and under came in as the
some good investment had been opened by the governm
while the quantities of goods and provisions offered c
scarcely have been received but for the promptitude with w
Messrs. Maiden Hill and Clarke gave up their great wool-s
on the Circular Quay as a depôt for the stores intended for
expedition.[1] A larger number of volunteer officers than w

[1] The author has to acknowledge his indebtedness to the excellent account of the organizat
the expedition published by the Southern Cross Publishing Company, Pitt Street, Sydney, for
and some other details.

be required had tendered their services to command the proposed battalion of infantry, and there was great enthusiasm among the men of the Permanent Force when they heard that they would probably be sent out, while from the recently-organized force of the naval artillery volunteers a large number came forward to offer their services.

On Saturday, the 14th, Mr. Dalley, with two of his colleagues, were present at a banquet at Burrowa given by the electors to their member, Mr. Slattery, and it was on his return journey that he received a telegram from the agent-general. This telegram, which had been sent on from Sydney to meet him, said: "Her Majesty's government accept with much satisfaction offer of your government, upon the understanding that the force must be placed absolutely under orders of general commanding as to duties upon which it will be employed. Force of artillery is greater than is required; only one battery accepted. Transport should call at Aden for orders. If your government prefer the immediate despatch of your contingent the war office does not desire to delay it. Press comment very favourably upon your splendid offer." This message, with those subsequently received stating that the offer had been accepted out of compliment to the colony, and that the queen had personally expressed her high appreciation of the generous and spontaneous offer of assistance from New South Wales to England, sustained the high pitch of enthusiasm already manifested, and not a moment was lost in preparing to select, organize, and equip the men who were to form the expedition from among the numbers eager to be enrolled. There was a temporary difficulty about the uniform of the infantry battalion, which was to be selected from the various regiments in the colony, and therefore presented some differences of appearance. The Volunteer Force had its own uniform, of course; but the uniform of the Permanent Force, though all scarlet, had various facings, and Colonel Richardson, who was to be in command, was of opinion that scarlet would not be very suitable for active service. It was debated whether a telegram should be sent to England for uniforms; but these matters always come right if

intelligence and prompt action are combined in solving any difficulty, and no real impediment was caused by the discussion. Horses thoroughly fit for the work of the campaign were easily obtained if they could be got together in time; but this duty also was placed in competent hands, and the formation of an ambulance corps and the important provision for a complete and efficient commissariat were undertaken with such energy and practical forethought that the whole force was rapidly formed, and a more compact and well-furnished contingent was perhaps never sent forth from any country in the world.

The New South Wales volunteer force is in reality what may be termed a volunteer militia, the volunteers having had a change made in their organization in 1878. The men are not accepted unless they come up to certain physical requirements, and, when enrolled, a certain number of attendances at drill is compulsory, and to these attendances a small payment is attached. Among other regulations it is required of them that they should undergo at least one week's continuous training in camp in the course of every year. This had been carried on for several years, and in this way the men had attained a knowledge of the interior economy of camp life, without which they would have been almost unfit for service in the field. Their commandant, Colonel Richardson, asserted that had they not had this training he would not have recommended them for service; and Colonel Richardson had a right to speak with authority, for he had had charge of the New South Wales forces since 1865. He joined the imperial army in 1854, having entered it by passing a direct examination at Sandhurst, and served with the 72d Highlanders at the siege of Sebastopol. In New Zealand, with the 12th Regiment, he went through the Maori wars of 1860–61 and 1863–64, during which period he was adjutant of the regiment. He had received Crimean, New Zealand, and Turkish medals. In February, 1865, he was appointed to the command of the New South Wales forces. In August, 1871, a regular force was formed, consisting of a battery of artillery, and two companies of infantry, but after that

time the infantry had been disbanded, and two more batteries substituted.

The arrangements for the despatch of the expedition were commenced in earnest on the morning of Monday, February 16. The staff officers Lieutenant-colonel Christie and Captain Mackenzie were in attendance at the regimental and brigade offices, and received many applications from persons desirous of serving with the expedition. The office was thronged by volunteers, officers of all grades, ex-volunteers, retired members of the imperial forces, and civilians anxious to tender their services; and the whole atmosphere of the place was warlike from morning to night. In the course of the morning 13 officers, 10 non-commissioned officers, 6 buglers, and 100 privates had been enrolled. A great many men who had formerly served in the imperial army proffered their services, and no less than 16 of these registered their names with the 1st Regiment. A man who had served 22 years in the imperial service, had been with his regiment in India, and held the honourable rank of colour-sergeant, registered his name and expressed his great desire to serve in the New South Wales force. Another soldier, who had served 17 years in the Cameronians, offered his services.

The question of remuneration was considered at a cabinet meeting held in the forenoon, and the following rates of pay were fixed:—Married men, 2*s.* 3*d.* daily pay, and 2*s.* 9*d.* per day deferred pay, or made payable to the wife, making 5*s.* per day pay, with allowance to the wife of 2*s.* per day, and 6*d.* per day for each girl in the family under 16, and 6*d.* per day for each boy under 14. Unmarried men were to receive 2*s.* 3*d.* daily pay, and 2*s.* 9*d.* deferred pay, which might be made payable to an order to parents or friends. These were the payments to gunners in the artillery and privates in the infantry; other ranks were to be paid in proportion, at rates to be subsequently notified. This scale, it will be seen, is far above the rate of pay given to the ordinary British soldier; but then it must be remembered that the men of New South Wales who volunteeer for this service are of a class vastly superior to the "Tommy Atkins" class of the British line. It was arranged

during the day that the following should be the strength of the contingent:—Artillery: 1 field-officer, 1 captain, 3 subalterns, 1 staff-surgeon, 1 extra officer, 26 non-commissioned officers, 8 artificers, 3 trumpeters, 168 gunners and drivers—total, 212 men, with 172 horses; 21 carriages, 6 16-lb. guns, 4 ammunition-wagons, 1 spare gun-carriage, 1 forage-wagon, 1 store-wagon, 1 general-service wagon, 1 store-cart, 6 small-arm wagons, for carrying infantry ammunition, and 300 rounds of shot per gun. Infantry: Colonel Richardson, in command of the whole contingent, Lieutenant-colonel Christie, Captain Mackenzie, and a paymaster; 2 lieutenant-colonels, 2 majors, 3 captains, including an adjutant, 2 surgeons, 9 lieutenants, 4 staff-surgeons, 1 bugle-major, 4 colour-sergeants, 20 sergeants, 30 corporals, 8 buglers, 433 rank and file, making a total of 522 men in all, with 24 horses for the officers. This made a total force, both arms combined, of 734 men.

Telegrams were coming in from various places where there were volunteer corps, and the enrolment went rapidly on, the Central Station having been changed to the Victoria Barracks. There the men were examined, and took an oath of loyalty, each man signing an agreement containing particulars of his name, age, locality, social and physical condition, personal identity, &c., and promising willingness to serve in the contingent for one year or two years if required.

On Monday the 17th of February the steamship *Australasian* of the White Star Line, then in Sydney harbour, was offered to the government as a transport-ship. A London cablegram had stated that the duties of the troops would be principally to protect the navvies who were to be engaged in the construction of a railway from Suakim to Berber. But the news that perhaps gave the most general satisfaction was to the effect that Lord Wolseley had telegraphed from the Soudan to Lord Augustus Loftus, Governor of New South Wales, expressing his pride and pleasure at commanding the colonial troops about to leave for the Soudan. It was also learned with pleasure that the British soldiers at Korti, the head-quarters of the commander-in-chief, were delighted at the news of the approaching arrival of troops from New South Wales.

Mr. Dalley was constantly busy, together with his colleagues, in making arrangements and expediting matters of detail. A telegram arrived from the agent-general, desiring to be informed, for the information of the war office, as to whether any reserve stores would be required; and also spare parts, accoutrements, and equipments, and if any reserve ammunition would be required; and also desiring that numbers and detailed particulars of the force going might be furnished. To this Mr. Dalley sent the following reply·

"Inform war office that we shall require no reserve stores; that we are providing spare parts of materials for repairs; that we are sending 300 rounds per gun, and 500 rounds per rifle. Battery of 6 guns, 212 men, 522 infantry, and 200 horses. Contingent leaves 3d March."

The enrolment of volunteers continued with unabated vigour, and a large number of applications was received from persons who appeared willing to give their services in any capacity so long as they might be allowed to accompany the expedition. Among these were many offers from ladies who desired to go out as ambulance nurses. It was, however, deemed advisable to decline these applications. It was decided that the clothing for the men should include the ordinary service uniform, and sea kits, which consisted of a jumper of blue cotton, a pair of serge trousers, cotton shirt, and pair of canvas slippers. Extra blucher boots were supplied, and the gaiters, which, with the water bottles, were ordered from home. As to the clothing for the artillery, Colonel Roberts decided that the kits were to be carried in what are known as bushmen's valises. By this means each pair of horses carried what was immediately required for three men. The driver's kit was to be placed in front of him, and the off horse would carry two extra kits. Colonel Roberts also suggested to the government that blue spectacles and bushmen's fly-veils should be issued to every man. The dress of the artillery was their ordinary blue serge Norfolk jacket, blue serge trousers, strapped for riding, and bushmen's leather gaiters. The service helmet was found to be heavy and very uncomfortable, and a light cork helmet appeared to be the best adapted for the climate.

The *Iberia* was to convey to Suakim 600 men, 26 officers, and 24 horses for infantry officers' mounts. The horse selection committee visited the various horse bazaars, and succeeded in purchasing good useful animals. The question of supplies had anxiously engaged the attention of Mr. F. A. Wright, the minister for works, for some time, and he forwarded to Mr. Dalley the following minute on the subject:—"I beg to submit to my honourable colleague, the acting colonial secretary, the following list of supplies required for the expeditionary forces to the Soudan, for both men and horses. The supplies for the troops are for six months, and for the horses 90 days, exclusive of the forage required for the transport. I have given the matter of providing for the men very careful consideration, being guided largely by the experience of our local officers, and by information gathered from the regulations and books issued by the Imperial service and by Lord Wolseley, and I have made, I think, ample provision for both men and horses. The climate is a hot one, and the troops may possibly be called upon to do hard work, and I have therefore dealt with them most liberally, as will be seen from the list inclosed. The daily supplies are in excess of the rations issued to the Imperial troops, but I do not think the scale I have submitted is an excessive one. There will be sufficient to supply the utmost wants of the men, while at the same time it will prevent undue extravagance:—Supplies required for the troops for the Soudan—750 men of all ranks, and 220 horses: rations estimated for troops, 180 days' supply; and forage for horses, 90 days' supply, and 40 days on transport. Daily rations: 1½ lb. bread or 1 lb. biscuit, and 1 lb. flour, 1½ lb. fresh meat or 1 lb. of preserved meat, and ½ oz. tea or coffee per day; 3 oz. sugar, ½ oz. salt, 1-36th oz. pepper, and ¼ oz. mustard, 2 oz. rice, 1 oz. lime-juice, and ½ lb. preserved vegetables; rum at discretion of officer, not more than one gill per day each. In addition, 1 lb. flour and 2 oz. currants or raisins per week. There will be thus required 53 tons of flour, 25 tons biscuit, 30 tons preserved meats, 2 tons tea and coffee, 11 tons sugar, 2 tons salt, 2 cwt. pepper, 1 ton mustard, 8 tons rice, 4 tons lime-juice, 30 tons preserved vegetables, 10 hogsheads rum, and

1 ton currants or raisins. For the 220 horses, 90 days' daily rations: 12 lb. hay, 10 lb. oats, and 33 lb. bran. While on transport, 40 days, 10 tons hay, 5 tons oats, and 5 tons bran. Total quantities: 146 tons hay, 242,000 bushels oats, equal to 110 tons, and 103,400 bushels bran, equal to 46 tons."

It would be quite impossible to describe the sustained enthusiasm and excitement which was manifested throughout the colony. The following account written at the time appeared in a colonial journal, and commencing by recording the reception of the telegrams from England already mentioned, said:

"Late on that Sunday night a grizzled old soldier, holding the rank of sergeant-major, lay quietly in bed, oblivious of the news that had arrived. Rat-a-tat-tat came a knock to the door. Rubbing the sleep from his eyes, he slowly turned out of bed and went to answer the call. A 'full private,' in his scarlet jumper, stood there stiff and straight as a post. 'Ordered to the front, Sergeant-major,' was the curt message. The sleep left the old veteran's eyes. He straightened himself, and, with every nerve thrilling through his body, answered, 'Ready!'

When next morning the announcement of the acceptance of our troops was published in official form, and the government called for volunteers, there was but one cry from north to south, from east to west—'Ready!' From little country villages hid away in the forest, from dusty towns out upon the parched plains, came pouring in telegrams in reply. 'We will send our five men,' cried a tiny settlement. 'We will send our twenty,' cried another. 'Here, take our hundred, and God bless the old land!' cried still another; and so the answers came. Old men whose legs were stiff found them grow lissome, as, their eyes brightening at the news, they cried, 'Hurrah for old England!' and offered to carry a gun in the regiment and spill their blood for mother land. Women, not only in our midst but from far-off colonies, said, 'Send us to nurse the wounded; let us play our part;' and young girls, as Elaine for Launcelot, sat down to work the standards to be carried in the war. And far and near, from the squatter in the back blocks to the merchant in the city, came rich gifts of money.

'Take this, and more we have to give,' they said. And those who gave not in money gave in kind. Depôts were formed, and one might laugh right heartily at some of the strange gifts that came pouring in, were it not that they were given with the heart to do something at this great time. In a couple of days chaos was reduced to order, and the work went on speedily and regularly, but the enthusiasm never flagged. It was no passing passion, but a deep-seated, firmly-rooted desire that filled men's hearts. We read—'The commandant has received with gratification and wonder the urgent appeals of staid business men, surrounded with families and many other ties, not to refuse them the privilege of serving the empire.' Old military officers, who had turned their swords into ploughshares, and had never dreamed of war again, brightened the dull metal of their cast-off uniforms, and buckling the belt around them, turned once more to war. Young men whose eyes had never seen the lands beyond the ocean, but who had the love of England with the life from their mother's breast, threw down the axe or the stock-whip, and came into the city to give their lives to the empire. It was a rich burst of chivalry that lifted men out of the life of every day into an atmosphere of generous emotion and exalted feeling. The excitement caused by the acceptance of the colonial offer of troops was no less great in the country than in the metropolis. Each day brought news of the departure of country volunteers for Sydney. The enthusiasm was manifested in all manner of ways. The volunteers were escorted by torchlight processions to the railway-stations, a patriotic address having been delivered on the way by the local mayor from the balcony of the chief hotel, which for the time became a fountain at which all quenched their thirst. Then, amid the hurrahs of the whole population, down to the babes in arms, the 'Soudan lads' took their seats in the carriages, the fife and drum bands striking up 'The girl I left behind me,' and with a final cheer that hid the sobs of many a wife, sister, or mother, the train moved off, and not till it was lost to sight did handkerchiefs cease to flutter or the cheering stop. The news was wired down the lines, and each station was crowded with people, who cheered the lads as they

passed through. Along the coast at the seaport towns the same hearty feeling manifested itself. Commanding officers of local corps delivered heroic speeches to the volunteers; ladies decorated them with ribbons of red, white, and blue; mayors made very vehement if not strictly grammatical orations, and poured out libations of strong liquor to the god Mars. Electric lights, blue lights, red lights, green lights, and every other sort of light were burned. Everybody wanted to shake hands with them; they were no longer referred to as men but as 'heroes;' they were glorified in the local newspapers, lauded by town-councils, and held up as patterns by rustic parsons. During these two exciting weeks there was no prouder boast of a mother than, 'My boy has gone to the war.'"

The war office here undertook to send ammunition for artillery guns and to provide for conveyance of supplies, and also to take charge of the forage and the rations for the troops on the same scale as that adopted for the imperial forces. General Graham had intimated that the 16-pounder guns would be too heavy for the Soudan, and therefore the war office sent word that only horses and harness should be supplied, and that a 6-gun 9-pounder battery of 6-cwt. guns and ammunition and carriages complete would meet the company at Suakim.

This change prevented the necessity of sending Colonel Roberts with the expedition, much to that officer's regret. Colonel Spalding was in command of the artillery, and rapidly completed the effective arrangements, including a provision for a number of revolvers to be sent from England to meet the men on their arrival at Suakim, so that each man of the artillery might be armed with one of these weapons and a full supply of ammunition.

The ambulance corps attached to the expedition was as complete as the other departments; the officers were Surgeon-major Williams, and Surgeons Glanville and Proudfoot, with two non-commissioned officers, two dispensers, and twenty-four trained bearers, many of whom were experienced men in army hospital service. There were five ambulance wagons, fully fitted up on latest service principles, each wagon to carry seven wounded—two in front seat, two inside

on stretchers, so arranged that when in position but very little motion would be felt, and three on the back seat. There were two pharmacy and surgical wagons, fitted with instruments, drugs, and medical comforts, in such a way that each article was placed in boxes and drawers, which were lettered and numbered, so that the article could be at once procured. Two wagons were provided for carrying tents, both for hospital and operating; bedding, clothes, and reserve stores; two field wagons, fitted up to carry general hospital stores; one water-cart; 4 saddles, with saddlery complete, twenty-six horses, with harness complete, allowing for spare sets.

These details are mentioned to show how completely the Australian contingent was provided, and how the earnest sentiments of the colonists found quick and practical expression. There could be little doubt that the ready formation of this force was regarded both at St. Petersburg and at Berlin with very serious attention, and that it was accepted as a proof that imperial federation of British possessions was immeasurably more than a theory, and went infinitely beyond a mere political expression.

It was not to be expected that the "patriotic movement," as it was named, and the provision of the contingent in so short a time on the responsibility of the ministry and while the colonial parliament was not sitting, would be accepted without some opposition. In New South Wales and the other Australian colonies political feeling is as pronounced as it is in England and political contentions run high. It was soon evident, however, that the opposition was entirely overborne by the public sentiment, and that no attempt to carry an amendment to the resolution proposed in the legislative council approving the conduct of ministers in despatching the contingent, would be successful. Perhaps the most prominent opponent of the action of the ministry was Sir Henry Parkes, whose name may be said to have been associated with the history of the colony, and who had been premier many years before; but Sir Henry's notions seemed to be those which belonged to a high-and-dry period for which the public had little sympathy. At several meetings held in different parts of the colony for various political and public celebrations the conduct of the ministry was

heartily endorsed, and not only Mr. Dalley, who eloquently and earnestly supported and defended the action that he had been foremost to advocate, but other members of the government also, and even some of the most able and important members of the opposition, warmly accepted and applauded the exhibition of public spirit which had led to the practical recognition of the unity of the Australian colonies with Great Britain and the empire.

As early as the 20th of February the action of the ministry had been endorsed at a great patriotic meeting held in the exhibition building in Sydney. The assembly had been convened by the mayor at the requisition of a very large number of citizens for the purpose of expressing sympathy with the action of the government in offering to send troops from New South Wales to assist the British arms in the Soudan, and to provide funds for the patriotic purpose of assisting the relatives of those who were to go to assert in Egypt the honour and loyalty of the colony. It was estimated that at least 12,000 people were present at this great demonstration, and the proceedings were opened by the mayor, who read various letters offering subscriptions, some of which were from officers of corporation, railway, and other official departments, contributing a day's pay from their entire staff to the fund.

The resolution proposed by the chief-justice Sir James Martin and seconded by Sir Patrick Jennings, "That this meeting endorses the prompt and patriotic action of the government of this colony in placing at the disposal of the imperial government a contingent of troops for service in Egypt, and accords its hearty approval of the same," was carried with a great outburst of applause and by an overwhelming majority. It was held by the vast meeting that if the government had waited for the convocation of parliament before deciding on the expedition they would have been too late, and the result of the meeting was the formation of a committee to receive contributions for and to administer a patriotic fund.

Two ministers of religion were attached to the contingent. The Rev. H. J. Rose of Christchurch and St. John's, North Shore,

was appointed Church of England chaplain, and the Rev. C. F. Collingridge, chaplain of the Convent of the Sacred Heart at Rose Bay, represented the Roman Catholics of the contingent.

On March 1st, the Sunday before the embarkation of the troops, special services were held in most of the churches and other places of worship. At the cathedral (St. Andrew's) an eloquent sermon, addressed to the men, was preached by the primate, Dr. Barry; and at St. Mary's, the Roman Catholic cathedral, Archbishop Moran addressed the Roman Catholic section of the contingent. At both churches the services were of a very special character, and the proceedings may be said to have been a fitting preparation for the departure of the troops. On Tuesday the 3d of March the contingent was prepared to embark.

The Victoria Barracks, from early morning till the march to the point of embarkation commenced, were thronged with people, and for the most part with people who had a special right to be present, in view of their relationship or friendship with soldiers and volunteers. The men going to the Soudan were nearly all in the highest spirits, and those who remained behind were fired with martial ardour to such an extent that had a single man chosen to go to Egypt suffered some accident which would have compelled him to stay at home, there would have been hundreds of volunteers for the vacant place. Before the troops marched there were several thousands of people within the barrack walls. Many a pathetic scene occurred, as wives, mothers, or sisters took what might be the last farewell of the brave fellows going out to fight for the land of their fathers, and here and there an affecting parting between lovers obtruded itself upon the gaze of the passer-by. The few hours before noon must have been very trying to the members of the contingent, distracted as they were from quietly making their final preparations by the crying of women and the fervent valedictions of friends; but there was no disorder, and when the signal was given to fall in it was promptly obeyed. At half-past eleven the men dined, and afterwards there was a short interval before they were paraded, and at this time the square presented a

phenomenal sight, the verandahs of the different buildings being packed with people, the walls half-covered, and the ground thronged with soldiers and civilians, the bright uniforms of the former contrasting with the tasteful costumes of the ladies who came to do them honour. A calm spirit dwelt over the scene, and all excitement was subdued until noon. Previous to that hour the men were formed into squads, and examined by Adjutant Bartlett and his subalterns, with a view to ascertain that each had his accoutrements and was prepared to proceed to the point of embarkation. They were afterwards dismissed. It would be difficult to realize a more orderly set of men being got together than were these men the colony was sending forth to the field. They fraternized with the visitors and chatted sociably with their comrades, and seemed as light-hearted as though they were entering upon an Easter encampment.

Suddenly the rattle of drums was heard, and the regular tramp of men accustomed to shoulder the rifle fell on the ear, and the sounds set the first great wave of excitement in motion, for it announced the period of the real business of the day. They came from the detachments from her Majesty's ships of war in the harbour, and as the gates were thrown wide open a body of pioneers marched in, heading 550 blue-jackets, marine artillery, and marine infantry. The band played one of the liveliest marches, and the men trooped in, and by their bearing, their physique, and the smartness of their dress, at once challenged and won general admiration. The detachments had in their charge two Gardner guns, two field-guns, and two Gatlings, and they made a stirring rattle as they quickly rolled these into their assigned positions. It fell to the lot of the squads in charge of the guns to clear a square in which the New South Wales troops might form into line, and much amusement was created by the impetuous sweep they gave the terrible instruments they were attached to. Another exciting sensation occurred when the newly-formed cavalry corps entered the square. Of this there were fifty members present, and they were under the command of Captain Macdonald. They rode splendid animals, and imparted an agreeable variety to the scene.

Lastly, a considerable number of mounted troopers, under Captain Battye, filed in, and their animals also were sources of much admiration on account of the bone and muscle they displayed, and their splendid symmetry. His excellency the governor drove to the ground in his carriage, and was accompanied by the Hon. W. B. Dalley, acting colonial secretary, Captain A. D. Loftus, A.D.C., and Mr. H. A. Unwin, private secretary. Amongst the other distinguished persons present were the Hon. J. S. Farnell, minister for lands; the Hon. F. A. Wright, minister for works; the Hon. G. R. Dibbs, colonial treasurer; Hon. W. J. Trickett, minister for instruction; the Hon. H. E. Cohen, minister for justice; the Hon. J. Norton, postmaster-general; the Hon. J. P. Abbott, minister for mines; Mr. E. Fosbery, inspector-general of police; Rear-admiral Tyron; General Scratchley, high commissioner for New Guinea; and Sir Edward Strickland. The crowd, which was exceedingly well behaved, was easily kept in order by Inspectors Anderson, Waters, Larkins, Lenthall, Lawless, Cotter, and M'Kay, and about sixty police under their charge.

The day was observed as a public holiday, and from the date on which the offer of the colony had been accepted, to the hour of the departure of the contingent, public enthusiasm had been maintained at its utmost tension. The number of volunteers had reached six times the required strength of the force, and there had been a continuous flow of contributions in money and kind from all quarters, so that the patriotic fund on the 3d of March amounted to £45,000. On the Saturday the troops had been reviewed by Lord Augustus Loftus, the governor, in the presence of 50,000 spectators, and now the streets forming the line of route from the barracks to the Circular Quay, a distance of two miles, were lined by immense numbers of spectators assembled from all parts and forming a dense mass. The troops were escorted by the sailors and marines from the men-of-war, and by all the available local forces, and were accompanied by the governor, the ministers, and the principal officials of the colony. The procession formed an imposing spectacle, and the popular enthusiasm was unbounded, the progress of the contingent being greeted with loud cheers and

the frequent expression of good wishes from the assembled multitude.

The mounted police did their best to keep a clear passage for the troops, but they did not accomplish their object one half so successfully as the tars did; they literally carried everything before them. On they marched and the crowd fell back on either side almost instantaneously. Those who did not get out of the way were quietly hustled along until they were glad to creep to the rear of the crowds that lined the streets, and repent of their folly in endeavouring to stem the living torrent which swept on in such magnificent array. Looking down Oxford Street, the spectacle was simply bewildering. Long lines of streamers and gay-coloured flags stretched across the thoroughfare, and every coign of vantage was closely packed with human beings. Balconies, verandahs, and housetops were covered with spectators, many of whom threw choice bouquets on the moving column beneath them. The Soudan contingent was especially favoured in the matter of floral decorations, and many of the fair occupants of the balconies showered rice and ribbons upon the heroes of the day. Some of the volunteers appeared to be much affected by these demonstrations of good-will, and many a brave fellow's eye moistened as he glanced for the last time on the loved form of mother, sister, or sweetheart. The members of the contingent quickly transferred the flowers to their button-holes and belts, while some fixed them on the points of their bayonets. In this manner they marched on with a swinging step to the well-worn tune of "The Girl I left behind me." Many of the ladies who had stationed themselves along the line of march were deeply affected by the stirring scene, and not a few of them kissed the young soldiers as they passed by. Others wished them "God speed" with a trembling voice, and some there were who smiled approvingly on the men of the contingent, and bade them be of good cheer. Cries of "Bravo, boys!" "Give it to the Mahdi!" and "Advance Australia!" were of frequent occurrence. One balcony at the lower end of Oxford Street was crowded with ladies, and these also showered down a profusion of flowers upon the blue-jackets, marines, and the

contingent. On passing the Cambridge Club Hotel several bags of rice, evidently meant as an expression of good-will towards the men who were going to the Soudan, were emptied from the lofty balconies of the building on to the crowds below, and hearty cheering followed this token of good feeling. Just at this spot the crowd was very great, and right along College Street the spectators were formed up in dense masses on either side of the procession. The sloping banks of Hyde Park were covered by an immense concourse of people, who cheered enthusiastically as the contingent passed by; and Mr. Dalley and Mr. Dibbs were frequently applauded. Appropriate mottoes were displayed at intervals along Oxford and College Streets, amongst them being two bearing the inscriptions "Strike for Victory!" and "God Speed!" The latter also bore a representation of the Southern Cross. Turning into Park Street the scene was an exceedingly pretty and animated one. Dense crowds lined the thoroughfare, and vast multitudes were assembled inside the railings of the park. The foliage of the trees, together with the bunting and the gay-coloured costumes of the ladies, produced a charming effect. The standards carried in the midst of the naval contingent also added to the effect of the spectacle.

On reaching the quay the men formed square and were addressed by the governor as follows:—

"Soldiers of New South Wales,—I have considered it my duty, as the representative of her Majesty, to say a few words to you at this solemn moment before your embarkation. For the first time in the great history of the British Empire a distant colony is sending, at its own cost and completely equipped, a contingent of troops, who have volunteered with an enthusiasm of which only we who witnessed it can judge, to assist the imperial forces in a bitter struggle for the suppression of unspeakable cruelty and for the establishment of order and justice in a misgoverned country.

Countless as have been the occasions when the blood and treasure of England have been poured out freely to protect the feeble, to shield the defenceless, or to maintain right, there has never been one in which humanity has been more deeply interested

COLL. JOHN SOAME RICHARDSON, C.B.,

COMMANDER OF THE AUSTRALIAN CONTINGENT IN THE EASTERN SOUDAN. 1885

BLACKIE & SON, LONDON, GLASGOW, EDINBURGH & DUBLIN.

in the triumph of the arms of England than the cause which you have heroically resolved to uphold by your valour.

You will be greeted in Egypt by the ready welcome of thousands of chivalrous soldiers who have never yet looked upon such an action as yours. The eyes of your gracious Queen will be bent upon your exertions; and in every part of the world where our flag floats men, women, and children will eagerly read of your exploits and pray for your success.

Soldiers! you carry in your keeping the honour of this great colony, which has made such splendid sacrifices in order to send you to the front with an equipment of which the nations most practised in war might have been proud. You will have the glorious privilege of helping to maintain the honour of the empire. In your ranks are numbers who are voluntarily leaving the paths of fortune, worldly advantages, the comforts of home, and the sweetness of domestic life for heroic service in a bloody war, in which already many brave men have been stricken down. You are doing this to show to the world the unity of the mighty and invincible empire of which you are members.

Your country charges itself with the care of the dear ones you leave behind, and all that generosity, tenderness, and gratitude can do to care for them and to succour and console them will be looked upon as a labour of love by the nation."

His excellency, in bidding farewell to the men, said:—"Our earnest hope is that it may be your glorious privilege to share in the triumph as in the service, and that you will come back to us crowned with England's gratitude as you are now encompassed with her sympathies."

The commandant (Colonel Richardson) saluted his excellency, and delivered the following reply:—"My Lord,—On behalf of the officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers of the contingent, I beg to return my sincere thanks for the inspiriting and kind address which you have given to us this day. If anything were wanting to complete our loyalty to her Majesty the Queen, it has been done by your lordship's speech this afternoon, for every man who has volunteered in this service is determined to do his duty,

not only to her Majesty the Queen, but for the honour of the colony. I again thank you on behalf of the officers, non-commissioned officers, and men."

The speech of Colonel Richardson was followed by loud and repeated cries of "Mr. Dalley;" but the acting colonial secretary did not respond, that gentleman's reason for failing to address the assemblage being that on the occasion of the departure of the contingent for the scene of war they should not be addressed by any others than the representative of the queen and their commandant.

The contingent then marched on board the transports, the infantry and most of the artillery embarking on the *Iberia*, which took 600 of the men, the remaining 200, together with the horses and stores, being conveyed on board the *Australasian*.

Enthusiastic cheers arose from the quay as the vessels steamed away to the Heads, accompanied by a perfect fleet of steamers, all flying their gayest bunting. The scene was brilliant and impressive as the steamers moved off amidst the resounding cheers of the vast concourse of people: the fluttering of handkerchiefs, the waving of flags: the music of the bands and the firing of signal guns. It was an occasion never to be forgotten by those who witnessed it.

His excellency the governor despatched a telegram to her Majesty the Queen, on the afternoon of the departure of the troops, in the following words:—"The Queen, Windsor Castle, England. Sydney contingent of 800 men, 224 horses, sailed to-day; great demonstration; immense enthusiasm, with intense loyalty to your Majesty. (Signed) GOVERNOR." To which Lord Augustus Loftus received the following answer from her Majesty: —"Greatly gratified by your account of the departure of the contingent and enthusiasm displayed by my loyal subjects." His excellency also received, in reply to a telegram sent to the Duke of Cambridge, the following telegram from his grace:—"Thanks for your telegram, and congratulate yourself and the colony on the loyal spirit evinced, which I highly appreciate."

The latest despatch in the correspondence was a telegraphic one

from Lord Derby to Sir W. Robinson, dated the 4th inst., saying:—"Her Majesty's government are carefully considering patriotic offer of troops. While disposal of further contingents during summer heat in Soudan would be most difficult to arrange, if a colony, either independently or acting jointly with others, can despatch force in August to arrive in Egypt in September, her Majesty's government will most gladly receive it. Desirable to know early probable number, description, and previous training of force; also whether advisable to supply from home any officers and non-commissioned officers experienced in field. Important, if possible, each colonial contingent should drill together during month or more before embarking. Early answer valuable. Send copy Governor of Victoria, Governor of Queensland."

A meeting was held at the war office on the 3d of March, the day of the departure of the Australian contingent, between the agents-general of the Australian colonies and the official representatives of the colonial and war departments. The meeting was attended by the secretary of state for war, the secretary of state for the colonies, his Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge, Lieutenant-general Sir A. Alison (adjutant-general), the Earl of Morley (parliamentary under-secretary of state for war), and Sir Robert Herbert, K.C.B. (permanent under-secretary of state for the colonies). The colonies were represented by Sir Saul Samuel, K.C.M.G. (agent-general for New South Wales), Sir Arthur Blyth, K.C.M.G. (agent-general for South Australia), Mr. Robert Murray Smith, C.M.G. (agent-general for Victoria), and the Hon. J. F. Garrick (agent-general for Queensland). The object of the meeting was to obtain information as to the colonial contingents whose services had been offered to her Majesty's government, and to discuss the conditions under which they should be employed in the autumn operations in the Soudan.

Early in February it had been determined, that while the river column, under General Brackenbury, should push on that it might co-operate in attack on Berber with the troops of the desert column that were to be reinforced by the contingent under

General Redvers Buller at Abu-Krú, a strong force of all arms should be sent out to Suakim to crush Osman Digma. Thus the power of the Mahdi and of his lieutenant would be destroyed at about the same time, and a junction of the forces might be effected by the construction of the railway line to Berber and the complete clearance of the desert route.

The Hospital and Commissariat corps were to sail from Southampton on Feb. 17; 20th Hussars, from Portsmouth, probably Feb. 19; 5th Lancers, from Kingstown, Feb. 20; Royal Engineers and Commissariat, Feb. 18; Woolwich, ordnance stores and provisions, Feb. 17; mules and camels were to start at once from Alexandria. Three battalions of guards from Albert Docks on Feb. 18th; medical stores and detachments of Army Hospital Corps, Feb. 18; Woolwich, ordnance stores, Feb. 18; Dorset Regiment, from Gravesend, Feb. 18; 2d Battalion Dublin Fusiliers were to leave Gibraltar early, and water-condensing machinery, and water-tanks were rapidly being prepared for immediate despatch.

Lieutenant-general Sir Gerald Graham, V.C., K.C.B., was appointed to the important command of the expedition to open up the Suakim-Berber route and to co-operate with Lord Wolseley's force. Brevet Major-general Fremantle was appointed to command the brigade of guards ordered to Egypt; and Major-general Greaves received the appointment of chief of the staff, a position corresponding with that held by General Adye under Lord Wolseley in the Egyptian campaign of 1882. General Fremantle, who had held the command at Suakim for some time previously, had reconnoitred much of the ground to be traversed, and was considered eminently qualified for the important command of the brigade of guards. Major-general Hudson had the command of the Indian contingent, and would have control of three thousand men.

On the 19th of February the 3d Battalion of Grenadier Guards were inspected by the queen in the quadrangle of Windsor Castle previous to their departure for the Soudan, and she addressed the officers in a short and encouraging speech, which was afterwards

repeated to the corps by the colonel. The same evening Lieutenant-general Sir Gerald Graham had an audience with her Majesty, of whom he took leave before his departure for the Soudan.

Preparations for sending a considerable force (about 7000 men) with all the materials for constructing the railway and for maintaining a campaign continued, although the reserves were not called out until nearly a month afterwards; but by that time it had become evident that the plan of procedure would have to be changed.

Operations against the hostile tribes of Osman Digma were to be carried on vigorously, but there was little or no probability that any movement could be made against the Mahdi's forces at Berber either by the desert route and Metammeh, or by the Nile and Abu Hamed: for after the removal of the sick and wounded from the camp at Abu-Kru to Abu-Klea, General Buller had found his position untenable against the swarming forces of the Mahdi coming from Khartûm and Berber, and had retired with the whole force—his own troops and the remains of the desert column. At about the same time General Brackenbury, with his Nile column had gone through the Shukook Pass, had reached Salamat, where they destroyed the whole of the property of the treacherous Suleiman Wad Gamr, the murderer of Colonel Stewart and his party; had gone on to Hebbeh, the scene of the murder itself, and thence to the end of the Monassir country, and almost within touch of Abu Hamed, when a message of recall reached him from Korti, in which General Wolseley informed him of the evacuation of Gubat, the retirement of General Buller to Abu-Klea, and the abandonment of all hope of going to Berber before the beginning of the autumn campaign.

On the 12th of February Sir R. Buller ordered the departure of the wounded from the camp at Abu-Kru to Abu-Klea with an escort of 300 men from the three camel regiments, and the start was made on the following morning, the most severely wounded men being carried in litters by Egyptian bearers. Sir Herbert Stewart was the first to be conveyed on this mournful procession,

and he was so sadly altered in appearance, that though he was able to recognize those around him, very little hope could have been entertained of his recovery. Colonel Talbot was in command of the escort; and the scouts who went forward to act as guides through the bush could find no signs of the enemy though there was a great sound of tom-toms in Metammeh, from which it was reported that a force had gone out soon after the convoy and the wounded had started. By 11 o'clock the convoy had reached to within four miles of the end of the scrubby bush, beyond which the country lay open all the way to Abu-Klea. Preparations were made for breakfast, when a report came in from Lieutenant Dawson, who commanded the scouting party, that the bush was full of the enemy's cavalry and spearmen. The column was at once re-formed; the guards and marines under Captain Pearson advanced with their camels 200 yards into the bush, where, as they were under fire, they dismounted and formed square, the heavy camel regiment being in square in front, the mounted infantry in rear of the convoy, which was guarded in flanks by the Egyptians. The bullets from the enemy fell thick and fast into the little square of about ninety men, the enemy being invisible because of the thick bush. Except a glimpse now and then of a horse or a spear, there was nothing for our men to fire at in return, and the situation was exceedingly perilous, when they received an order from Colonel Talbot to retire to the main body, as they might otherwise be cut off by the surrounding enemy. It was a critical moment; for to retire at once would be to leave the camels with the men's kits and ammunition; but in a quarter of an hour volunteers—one man to six camels—had offered to lead the animals, while the rest with the wounded had to halt every few paces to fire volleys into the bush whence the concealed enemy kept up a galling fire, and were expected every moment to make a rush upon the small retiring force. So close were the Arabs that while Lieutenant Dawson was carrying one of his wounded men, another poor fellow was shot in the back and fell at his feet, and not only was smoke coming from the bullet hole, but his coat and hair were on fire. The officer stopped and pressed out the

fire, but the man died almost directly. On reaching the main body of the convoy and forming square on the left front with the heavy camel regiment, the mounted infantry forming square on the right rear, the force waited expecting a charge from the Arabs, who were howling and yelling their signals for assembling for attack. The mounted infantry were firing volleys, and the faint sound of some bugles was supposed to come from their direction, so that when the men of the left front caught sight of troops moving past an opening in the scrub at about 700 yards distance, they were brought to the "present," and would have fired had not the officer with his field-glass discerned that there were helmets, and a few minutes afterwards Colonel Brabazon of the hussars rode forward with the good news that the light camel regiment, about 300 strong, under Colonel Stanley Clarke, had come up from Abu-Klea *en route* for Gubat.

The Arabs soon decamped on the arrival of this reinforcement, none of the men of which had been injured though the troops in the rear of the convoy had fired a couple of volleys at them, mistaking them for the enemy, as they passed through the dense bush. It was quite impossible to tell what was the force of the Arabs, nor could any one see in what direction they retreated. Our troops were, however, able to march in extended order till they got clear of the scrub, and after halting for the night, started off early on the morning of the 14th for Abu-Klea, and arrived there before noon. From Abu-Klea the wounded started next day for Gakdul, but they had scarcely left before General Buller and the whole force from Gubat marched in. The uncertainty which had been felt as to the prosecution of the enterprise against Metammeh and Berber was now at an end, and it was known that operations had been abandoned. General Buller had remained at Gubat for some time making demonstrations designed to induce the Mahdi's army there to come out and fight; but though there was evidently a great muster of forces, and much noise and tom-tomming, they made no active response; the demonstration, however, kept their attention absorbed while the camp at Abu-Kru was broken up and everything that could not be carried away was

destroyed before the entire force marched out. This was all the more difficult from the fact that for some days small outpost skirmishes had been of frequent occurrence. The enemy was receiving guns and reinforcements from Khartûm, and the neighbouring tribes had received the commands of the Mahdi to assemble for the purpose of attacking the British force. The enemy's videttes were visible across the river, and the Arabs were gradually closing around our camp. Deserters from Metammeh, some of whom were escaped Egyptian soldiers, reported that the enemy there, on the 8th of February, were reinforced by 500 men from Khartûm. They had little food. Their total strength was 4000 men, with three guns.

But our force at Abu-Kru was actively employed, and gave the enemy little peace. Lord Charles Beresford made daily trips up or down the river, going five or ten miles in the steamer *Safia* to prevent the enemy from fortifying the bank, and to secure supplies. A company of British soldiers and 200 of General Gordon's men accompanied these expeditions. Upon the 7th our men made a successful reconnaissance, and destroyed a well-made unoccupied fort to the north-east of Metammeh. The same day a foraging party secured twenty-five cattle and a number of sheep and goats on the south-west bank. On the 8th, seven miles up, our men saw another fort, and secured several hundred goats, besides wood and supplies.

It was evident, however, that for so small a force to attempt to take and hold Metammeh, or to hold the camp on the Nile bank at Abu-Kru, would be futile now that Khartûm had fallen and the Mahdi's followers were swarming down. The total evacuation of the camp and the retirement of the force from Gubat was therefore a necessary as well as a skilful manœuvre, however disappointing to the men of that desert column which had fought its way to the Nile and had hoped soon to deliver the captives at Khartûm. It was something under such adverse circumstances to be able to retire upon Abu-Klea with a feeling of confidence that no force that the Mahdi could bring would be able successfully to resist the return of the column which might have now to fight its way back.

Abu-Klea was a difficult and dangerous place for a small force to hold against the host of the enemy, for, as we have seen, the seriba was on low or level ground surrounded by hills, the occupation of which could only be effected by a considerable number of troops, while the enemy concealed amidst the heights could keep up a constant, deadly, and harassing fire from their long-range rifles. As a large force of the Arabs had followed General Buller on the march they were able to take up a threatening position around his camp at Abu-Klea, where he was compelled to avoid a general engagement. Even if he could have stimulated the enemy to come out and fight he could not risk adding to the number of the wounded, for he had so few camels that he was compelled to wait for the return of those that had gone on with the convoy to Gakdul on the 15th.

Alas, on the day following their departure (the 16th February), just as that convoy came to a halt at the end of the day's march, the general who had led the desert column from Korti passed into the silent land. For some time it had been feared—had been expected—that the effects of the wound he had received must be fatal, and he had himself felt from the first that he would not live to reach England. All that was mortal of the brave and beloved general was carried to Gakdul on the 17th of February, and on the afternoon of that day his grave was made in the solitude of the desert, where his body was laid by his sorrowing comrades and with military honours, amidst a scene so impressive that it was not to be forgotten by any of those who were present.

The following despatch was sent by Lord Wolseley to the secretary of state for war:—"Korti, February 22, 1885.—My Lord,—I have the honour to forward herewith Colonel Talbot's report of the death of Major-general Sir Herbert Stewart, K.C.B., an event which has deprived her Majesty of one of her bravest soldiers and most brilliant leaders, and has caused amongst all ranks of the army of the Soudan the most genuine and heart-felt sorrow. Few commanders have succeeded to a greater degree than Sir Herbert Stewart in winning the affection of those who served with or under him, whilst his many and high military

qualities rendered him a general whom England could ill afford to spare. His death is felt by all here at once as a private and a national loss. Leaders such as he was are rare in all armies. It may be long before the service or the country can fill the gap which his death has caused." Colonel Talbot said in his report: —"I beg to be allowed to express the deep grief of all ranks who have had the privilege of serving under this distinguished officer, especially of those who have so lately followed him into action, and also their sense of the great loss which they, the army generally, and the country, have sustained."

When Lord Wolseley's despatch announcing Stewart's death was read to the House of Lords, the Duke of Cambridge and the Earl of Morley added their testimony to that of Lord Wolseley and Colonel Talbot, to the high worth of the deceased officer, and to the painful regret felt at his loss. Lord Wolseley had written: "No braver soldier or more brilliant leader of men ever wore the queen's uniform. England can ill afford the loss of this young general, while his death robs me of the services of a dear friend and of a dear comrade." Lord Wolseley's opinion of Sir Herbert Stewart was well known. In the previous year some one expressed a doubt as to whether Stewart would arrive in time at Suakim. "Time!" said Lord Wolseley, who overheard the remark; "Stewart will be in time if he has to put to sea in nothing better than a cockle-boat."

The deceased general was not more remarkable for his bravery and resolution than for his intelligence. He was thoroughly conversant with all the details of his profession. He possessed a very remarkable knowledge of military history, and could describe the main events of almost any battle of importance on which he was questioned, and he was especally conversant with the battles of the Franco-Prussian war. When he was in India he was employed at a station in Bengal during a severe epidemic of cholera, and he had often stated that during that period he was in greater danger than in any campaign in which he was afterwards engaged.

Sir Herbert Stewart had a very remarkable faculty, not only

for performing varied and difficult duties, but for winning the confidence and regard of those under his command. His career had been as honourable as it was active, and his comrades in arms had a sincere affection for him as a brave, simple, kindly gentleman, and at the same time as a dashing and brilliant cavalry officer.

Major-general Sir Herbert Stewart, K.C.B., born on June 30th, 1843, was eldest son of the Rev. John Edward Stewart, rector of Sparsholt, Hampshire, and was a great-grandson of the seventh Earl of Galloway. His mother was daughter of the late Charles John Herbert, of Muckross, county Kerry. He was educated at Winchester College,[1] and entered the army as ensign in the 37th Regiment (now the Hampshire) in 1863. It is not generally known that Stewart was at one time intended for the bar, that he kept all his terms and ate all his dinners, but in the end abandoned that life for a military career. He was gazetted lieutenant in 1865 and captain in 1868. For two years from this time he acted as aide-de-camp to the major-general commanding the Bengal Presidency, and the year following as deputy-assistant quartermaster-general in Bengal. In 1873 he joined the 3d Dragoon Guards, on the lists of which regiment his name now stands as major. In 1878 he passed the Staff College and served as brigade major in the Zulu war of 1879, and was present at the affair of Erzungayan. He was specially employed on the lines of communication after the breaking up of the cavalry brigade, and for his services here he was mentioned in Colonel Russell's report, with brevet rank as major, which rank he gained substantively in 1882. He served as principal staff officer to the Transvaal field force in the operations against Secocoeni, and as military secretary and chief of the staff to Sir Garnet Wolseley, and in this capacity he gained further mention in despatches and his brevet of lieutenant-colonel, together with a medal and clasp. In 1881 he went to South Africa on special service, and was assistant adjutant and

[1] Only a few days before writing these lines the author was sitting at dinner next to a friend who had been Herbert Stewart's junior and "fag" at Winchester. This gentleman on referring to the deceased general spoke of him in terms of earnest admiration and affection, saying, that everybody liked him, that he was one of those who seemed born to influence, if not to command others by a kind of personal charm, and that all the juniors were pleased to do anything for him.

quartermaster-general in the Boer war, for which he was again mentioned. After the battle of Majuba Hill Stewart returned to England, and became aide-de-camp to Earl Spencer at the anxious period when the murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish caused such a deep throb of indignation in the country.

One of the earliest appointments made on the organization of the army for the first Egyptian war was that of Stewart as staff officer to Sir Drury Lowe, who was to command the cavalry division, and Stewart was one of Wolseley's most active and trusted counsellors in making the preparations for the expedition. He distinguished himself at Tel-el-Kebir, and took part in General Drury Lowe's brilliant ride through the desert to Cairo. When the Egyptians sent out a white flag to meet the advancing British force, it was Stewart who, at the head of one hundred lancers and dragoons, demanded and received the surrender of the citadel. Stewart had left Ireland to take part in the Egyptian war, and after the battle of Tel-el-Kebir and the occupation of Cairo he returned to Dublin to resume a position on Lord Spencer's staff; but the Egyptian campaign was not over, and when General Graham went to Suakim Stewart went with him, and displayed excellent soldierly qualities at Tamasi. At the latter battle his horsemen had a great share in retrieving the fortunes of the day, when the first square broke beneath the Arab charge. He then received the rank of K.C.B.

We have already seen with what spirit and energy he entered upon the difficult duty of commander of the desert column, which he led to the victory that proved fatal to himself. It was understood that Lady Stewart was on her way to Egypt to nurse her wounded husband when the sad news of his death reached this country.

A considerable force of the enemy assembled, as was expected, around Abu-Klea, and kept up a distant but galling fire upon the camp of General Buller's column. Captains Walsh and Paget of the mounted infantry, Quartermaster Jamieson of the Royal Irish, and Surgeon O'Neill of the medical staff were wounded. The enemy's cavalry and a large number of riflemen continued

scouting round the camp, the riflemen afterwards crossing to the hills to the east and north-east of the seriba, whence they kept up a continuous fire at long range, by which two men were killed and fourteen wounded. This was on the 16th of February, and the condition of affairs continued for some days. During that time it was necessary to deepen the wells, and such numbers of the enemy were marching at no great distance that it was thought necessary to wait for the return of the guards' camel division, and the mounted infantry, who had been sent to Gakdul with the convoys of wounded. The position of General Buller at Abu-Klea was apparently safe from attack by the enemy, who, numerous as they were, had no relish for a fight with the victors of Abu-Klea and Gubat. On one occasion a large body of the Arabs made a move northward, probably for the purpose of ascertaining the strength and composition of the convoy from Gakdul, which was then on its way back to the camp, but finding the route occupied by a chain of our pickets and some of our scouting parties they returned to the place from which they had started rather than come to close quarters.

The increasing number of the enemy made it evident that had an attack been made upon Metammeh it would have been at a very heavy loss, which would have left the already diminished column (had the town been taken) in a state of siege and cut off from their communications by the surrounding enemy, while the advance of the Mahdi would have ensured the rising of the tribes, and would thus have rendered it almost impossible to maintain communication across the desert. As it was, the retirement of General Buller with the column to Abu-Klea had been effected without molestation from the enemy, and it soon became known by message from Korti that on the first opportunity the return should be completed by a march to Gakdul, which could only be made slowly, as the camels were already pretty well exhausted, and the greater part of the troops would have to go on foot.

The Arabs seem to have made some attempt to resort to their treacherous artifices, for on the 20th a white flag was seen to be flying in their camp, and this flag was soon made out to be, not

a banner, but a (probably false) signal of truce. Captain Pigott with the mounted infantry approached the camp, which he found had been evacuated by the Arabs, who had left the flag behind, a letter being attached to the flagstaff. This communication bore neither date not signature, but stated that two of the Mahdi's lieutenants desired to communicate with the general commanding the British army. The letter was answered by General Buller, who demanded to know what proposals the Mahdi's lieutenants had to make, as he could not enter into communication with them without knowing what was their object. On taking back this reply, however, Captain Pigott's party was fired upon (possibly by Arabs who were unacquainted with the object of their advance), and was finally obliged to return to camp without having been able to deliver the letter. During the remainder of the day and the greater part of the day following nothing of moment occurred, but on the next evening it was discovered that the Arabs were returning to their camp. Accordingly a fresh attempt to parley was made by Major Kitchener, who, it was said, held a short colloquy with the enemy, but nothing came of it. He was, however, not interfered with by them, but returned to camp without mishap. Major Wardrop returned to Abu-Klea from Gakdul the same evening, bringing with him despatches for General Buller, which recalled the force to Gakdul and settled the question of further operations.

It was believed that the rebels in their camp amidst the hills were not well provided with food or water, and that they were compelled to send at intervals to Metammeh for necessary supplies; and after the episode of the white flag and the return to their camp there was a temporary lull. The convoy again started for Gakdul with about thirty wounded officers and men—many of them very seriously injured—and with them Gordon's black troops from Khartûm, who were willing either to fight or to do duty as bearers.

A correspondent who accompanied the convoy for some distance paid a brief visit to the scene of the first battle of Abu-Klea, and describes it as presenting a horrible spectacle:—"The desert for nearly a mile was strewn with the bodies of the

slaughtered Arabs. On our approach great numbers of carrion birds rose lazily from their sickening feast. They continued to hover around, however, until our departure. The corpses had already been shrivelled by the great heat and the dry air of the desert to the proportions and semblance of mummies, with this difference, that they lay twisted in every variety of contortion. In many instances the white bones, stripped of their covering by the foul birds, stared up at the beholder. Truly a sickening sight, and one to be remembered with a shudder. I am glad to record that our brave fellows remain undisturbed in their desert graves, a fact which will, I trust, afford some small comfort to their sorrowing friends at home. Having seen the convoy well on its way, some of us returned to this camp to await the final start north of this column. The convoy would have rested here awhile before starting on its return journey had it not been necessary to hasten their departure in consequence of increased signs of the enemy in more than one direction."

As the riflemen on the hills continued their harassing fire General Buller had opened a fire upon them with shells and the Gatling gun, and these were so accurately brought to range that the Arabs were for a time smitten with consternation as the shells burst among them, and wounded a considerable number. At the same time Major Wardrop, who was on his way back to Gakdul with three hussars as escort, reverted successfully to the ingenious tactics by which he had on a former occasion done such excellent service, and by making a circuit and firing upon the rear of the enemy first from one ridge and then from another during a rapid ride, and keeping well out of sight as he moved swiftly from point to point, he impressed the Arabs with a notion that they were being surrounded by a considerably extended force. This in conjunction with the shell-fire so alarmed them that they abandoned their position and went towards Metammeh, so that General Buller was able to occupy some part of the high ground. It was soon evident, however, that the further retirement of the column to Gakdul had better be hastened. Khashm-el-Mus had already been sent thither by the general, and though it was his opinion

that the Mahdi would not attempt to cross the desert and would hesitate before advancing to engage the English, there was no longer any doubt that a large force of at least 6000 Arabs were marching in the immediate neighbourhood of Abu-Klea, whence from the adjacent hills their column could be plainly seen coming from the direction of Khartûm, while their numerous standards and the field-guns that they carried with them showed that they were the expected reinforcements of the Mahdi's troops. This was on the 23d of February, and the preparations which had already been made for the retirement of our troops from Abu-Klea were pushed forward, so that the whole force marched out in the evening—Sunday evening—and under a brilliant moon, and with the cool air of the desert at night, made a by no means unpleasant journey, without halting till they had reached Jebel es Sergain. The next day the march was continued, and from some of the rocky heights of the defile of Abu Sayle the scouts could see at about eight miles' distance signs of the convoy which had started before them.

On the 27th Lord Wolseley telegraphed to the war office that General Buller's column had reached Gakdul on the previous day with all the sick and wounded doing well. The total killed and disabled of the desert force from the time it had left Korti amounted to 30 officers and 450 men out of a force of a little over 2000. The journey from Gakdul to Korti offered no serious difficulties; and thus ended the expedition that was designed to make the first advance towards the junction of our forces at Berber, for the relief of Khartûm.

We must now return, to follow, as briefly as may be, the fortunes of the Nile column, which, under the command of General Brackenbury was with difficulty advancing to Abu-Hamed. We have already seen that the message sent from Lord Wolseley had indicated that though the news of Gordon's death might be verified, and the original object of the expedition could not therefore be carried out, it was understood to be the intention of the British government to break up the Mahdi's power in the Soudan,

that a strong force of all arms was proceeding to Suakim to crush Osman Digma, and that Lord Wolseley would probably leave Korti to join General Buller's force and co-operate with the Nile column in the capture of Berber. These were the particulars made known to the Nile force by General Brackenbury on the 13th of February. The men had not previously been informed of the fall of Khartûm, but as the Reuter's telegram which came into the camp referred to it the general thought it was desirable to circulate an official memorandum instead of leaving unauthentic rumours to disturb the minds of the men.

On the 14th of February the boat column prepared to pass the Uss Rapid opposite Uss Island, a troublesome obstacle not marked in the maps. At the same time General Butler with the mounted troops entered the beginning of the long village of Salamat, which extends for above two miles along the left bank of the river opposite the island of Sherri. The village was deserted, and there was another difficult rapid opposite the island.

The Shukook Pass had threatened to be one of the ugliest places through which the troops would have to make their way, and it was with no small satisfaction that General Brackenbury, who had taken up his headquarters at the old dervish's camp opposite to the rapid and to the entrance of the pass, saw the head of the convoy and the battery emerge. "In some places," he tells us, "there was barely room for a loaded camel to pass between the perpendicular rocks; in others, where the path was wider, the rocks had been prepared for defence by loopholed stone sconces in the same way as the koppies and ridge at Kirbekan. There was no order or regularity in the plan of the rocks. They seemed to have been upheaved as a mass in some great volcanic convulsion, and to have fallen one upon another in every direction, covering a space some six miles long by three or four broad. With an infantry tied to the boats, as it was, and with so small a force of mounted troops it would have been a most difficult task to dislodge an active and determined enemy from such a position, of which he knew every outlet, and of which we knew nothing. It was an oppressive place to remain in. It had

not even the redeeming element of grandeur, such as great massive features give to the most rugged mountain range. It represented low, sullen savagery. It was typical of the tribe to whom it belonged. Orders were issued for a general advance of all the boats from their respective positions in the morning, and I was enabled with a light heart to report to General Wolseley that our cavalry had entered Salamat, and that the convoy was through the Shukook Pass."

Salamat was found to be deserted, so that there was no obstacle in that respect, but the rapid opposite Sherri or Shuari Island was bad enough to detain the troops three days in getting through it, and with a low Nile and the probability of further work in unknown rapids the journey to Abu-Hamed could not be safely estimated at less than ten days. On the island, which had also been abandoned, a quantity of grain and dates was found; and this was fortunate, as the progress of the troops through the rapids was so slow, and though no lives were lost in the dangerous passage, two or three boats were irretrievably damaged. Headquarters had been established at Salamat, occupying a house in a walled garden near the bank of the river, belong to a sister of Abu Bekr—and aunt, therefore, of Suleiman Wad Gamr.

This was on the 17th February, and at that time the instructions received from Lord Wolseley showed that a convoy was to have started from Korosko on the 15th to reach Abu-Hamed by the 20th or 21st, on the supposition that General Brackenbury would have reached that place and would be ready to leave it on the 22d or 23d. He was to remain there, however, till Lord Wolseley had heard from General Buller, and it was calculated that he could scarcely expect to reach Berber before the 13th of March. It will thus be seen that at this time the original plan of co-operation against Berber was maintained. General Brackenbury replied that the convoy he was to receive at Abu-Hamed would suffice to supply his force with provisions till the 23d of April but not longer, as no dependence could be placed on the promises of the sheikhs to send in food or cattle. But, at all events, one immediate object of the expedition had to be accomplished, and immediately on the

occupation of Salamat, Suleiman Wad Gamr's house had been taken possession of and searched. Some significant relics were found there, including one of Colonel Stewart's visiting-cards stained with blood, extracts from M. Herbin's papers, and photographs of Herbin and of the Austrian consul, which had been presented by them to Mr. Power. Here as well as on Sherri Island numbers of papers were discovered, those at Salamat being in chests. These were all secured and carefully examined. Suleiman Wad Gamr's house was a large one standing on an eminence with a colonnade supported by pillars, and with several courtyards, each with several rooms. It was entirely destroyed, the roofs being pulled down, and all wood useful for firewood being carried way. The walls were shaken by charges of gun-cotton, and then utterly destroyed by pick and shovel. Beams and solid wooden doors, rare articles in that country, were burned, and the house razed to the ground. All his *sakyehs* were also burned, and his palm-trees hewed down and destroyed with fire. Abu Bekr's property and that of his sister, Suleiman's aunt, were spared, but the house and property of Sheikh Oman, the man who had played false and escaped from the vâkeel and rejoined Suleiman, were destroyed.

General Brackenbury writes: "These houses were of a higher class than any we had met with in the Shagiyeh or Monassir country. They had some attempt at ornament and stood in gardens. In Abu Bekr's garden there was an orange tree full of blossom, the only one we had seen since leaving Dongola."

On the 19th February the column continued the advance from Salamat to push on to Abu-Hamed: the cavalry and camel troop first with every transport camel fully loaded up with grain and provisions. By five o'clock in the evening a bivouac was made at Sulimanyeh, and about nine miles forward and two and a half miles below the wreck of Stewart's steamer. Colonel Buller, who in reconnoitring had arrived opposite the wreck, had heard two Arab scouts shout from the right bank of the river, and had seen them ride off on their camels to the north.

Beyond the site of the wreck an Arab, who had been taken

prisoner, declared that Suleiman Wad Gamr had arrived at Sulimanyeh on the 16th, and on the following day had gone northward with Fakri Wad Etman, accompanied by about 400 men and a number of women and children, with many cattle, camels, and baggage. Lekalik, with the force which had retreated from the Shukook Pass, had, it was said, previously gone in the same direction, and the two sheikhs who had been with him at Shukook had been sent direct to Berber. Another prisoner, who said that he had left the neighbourhood of Abu Hamed on the 14th, had heard that many men from Berber had arrived there, and that 2000 Ababdehs, 1000 Bisharin, and some Robatab were assembled for the defence of the place. All these reports seemed to point to the probability that the enemy, reluctant or unable to show further resistance on the left bank of the Nile, would make a stand at Abu Hamed, and this conclusion was strengthened by the fact of the appearance of mounted scouts on the right bank and their gestures of menace and defiance. General Brackenbury therefore determined to cross the mounted troops and the transports to the right bank as soon as possible, and after inquiry it was settled that the crossing should be effected at Hebbeh, where, at the spot directly opposite the wrecked steamer, the conditions for taking the troops across were most favourable: the high left bank commanding the neighbouring country and the opposite shore, while a long sand-bank beneath the high bank led easily to the water, and on the opposite side only a quarter of a mile below was a high Nile island, forming a strong position for infantry, and with a similar sand-bank, the breadth from the left bank to the island being about 300 yards, while the island itself was separated from the right bank only by a narrow channel, over which at one place there was a dry crossing. The passage of the whole force was accomplished on the 20th and 21st, and was watched by the enemy's scouts on the left bank from behind the sand-hills less than a mile off in the desert until Colonel Butler dispersed them with a party of hussars. Guns, camels, horses, donkeys, baggage, all were taken across with remarkable quickness and success under the superintendence of Colonel Alleyne assisted by the staff-officers.

Two crossing-places were worked at the same time, and fifty boats were employed for each crossing, which was made down-stream and represented a distance of about 400 yards, the camels and horses being towed across with ropes to their heads; the horses swimming freely, the camels, who are not swimmers, floating on their sides with their heads held out of the water by the tow-ropes. Only three camels and one donkey were lost, and the crossing was otherwise effected without any serious accident.

Abu Bekr, the uncle of Suleiman Wad Gamr, had been compelled to go with the column; and now that they had come to Hebbeh, the scene of the murder of Colonel Stewart, was in mortal fear that he would be executed on the spot. Of course there was no such intention, and he was soon able to point out the house of Fakri Wad Etman, a native house of mud with an entrance into a small courtyard, on one side of which stood the house. It was not here, however, that Colonel Stewart and his companions would have been received, since this was the abode of the women. The murder must have taken place in the *Salaamlik*, or guest-chamber—a detached mud hut of one room only about fifty yards from the dwelling-house. General Brackenbury says: "We entered this small room, stooping to pass under the low doorway, with feelings of awe. But there was nothing to remind us of the terrible tragedy that had taken place there six months before. There were no signs of blood. The floor and all the ground round the hut had been carefully strewn with fine sand." A hundred yards in front of the door, on the river bank, stood the group of palms where some of Stewart's party had been attacked and killed according to the account given by the stoker Hassein. Before visiting this house, which was one of the first group of such buildings in Hebbeh, General Brackenbury and several officers had inspected the wreck of the steamer about four hundred yards up stream. The vessel was impaled on a large rock about two hundred yards from the proper right bank of the river. She was a much larger vessel than they had supposed her to be, measuring seventy feet from stem to stern and twenty-two feet in breadth over her paddles, the depth of her hold was four

feet six inches. The sides were protected by plates of iron, which were pitted with bullet marks and torn by case-shot or splinters of shell. She lay with her keel sixteen feet above the water level, as it was then low Nile, in an intricate narrow channel studded with rocks; while on the left bank of the river there was open clear water three hundred yards in breadth. "To us," says General Brackenbury, "it seemed incredible that the wreck was an accident, for it was almost impossible to believe she had not been purposely steered to her destruction. And yet, who can say? At high Nile she would have come rushing down the swift water above, and a very small error in steering would have caused her to be swept in here. The natives had stripped her of everything that could be of use, leaving her a mere shell. All her woodwork had been carried away, including the floats of her paddles, and such iron as was sufficiently portable. The after part of her hold was filled with sand, her bows were high out of water. A few torn scraps of letters and paper, of no particular interest, were littered about, but there was nothing whatever worth preserving as a relic." At the scene of the murder were found some fragments of books, some more of Stewart's visiting-cards, a shirt sleeve stained with blood, and a few papers which seemed to have belonged to Herbin and Power; but at Sherri Island there had been discovered five pages of Stewart's diary, describing Gordon's entry into Abu-Hamed and Berber on the way from Korosko to Khartûm. Abu Bekr said, that as soon as the steamer went ashore Fakri Wad Etman had sent a message to Suleiman Wad Gamr at Salamat, and that Suleiman had immediately ordered his camels, and had hastened to Hebbeh. This was found to confirm Hassein's assertion that the wreck had taken place at nine, and that Suleiman first appeared on the scene in the afternoon. The village of Hebbeh was destroyed on the 21st under the direction of the officers of the intelligence department, who searched carefully for papers or relics, even digging the ground wherever it seemed to have been recently disturbed, but nothing of importance was discovered, and no trace was found of Stewart's journal, which, as we have seen,

there was reason to believe had been carried to the Mahdi. The houses of Fakri Wad Etman and all his *sakyehs* and palm-trees were utterly demolished.

On the 22d and 23d the whole force again advanced, and on the evening of the latter day the last boat of the column had closed up, and the 215 boats lay moored side by side along the bank, having averaged ten and a half miles rowing against very swift water. Mounted troops reconnoitred to the front, the convoy and artillery marched on a broad front over the undulating desert sand, and dispositions were made to close up in such a formation as to resist any possible attack.

Spies returning from Berber and Abu-Hamed brought intelligence that there were only a few of the enemy between Abu-Hamed and the place at which our troops had bivouacked on the right bank, but it was evident that the Arabs were not aware of the column having crossed the river, for it was reported that a force under Suleiman Wad Gamr and other sheikhs were holding a rocky position on the other bank to oppose our advance. Our bivouac on the yellow sand occupied a strong semicircular position covering the boats and mounted troops on the sand-bank below. They were now within thirty miles of Abu-Hamed, resting after a hard day's work, in which 215 boats had been rowed through nearly eleven miles of rushing water. The wounded were all doing well, there had been no death since leaving the camp at Dulka, the men were in splendid condition, not one sick man had been sent back, there had been but one death from disease, and there were only eighteen men on the sick list. The general was perfectly confident that he would be able to vanquish any force that the Mahdi could bring against them in the open country that they were now approaching. At nine o'clock at night a rocket was fired from a high hill near the camp, and was followed by another five minutes afterwards—the signal which had been agreed upon in case the convoy from Korosko should have sent scouts to watch for the approach of the column. All was still, but a vigilant watch was kept, and every precaution was taken to prevent a sudden attack. The *réveillé* sounded at

half-past five on the morning of the 24th of January; at seven o'clock the leading boats of the Gordons had started. Cavalry scouts and patrols were out on duty, and the main body of cavalry had moved out of camp when a messenger arrived with a despatch from Korti, dated 20th February. "I opened it," writes General Brackenbury, "it was mostly in cipher; but some words in clear caught my eye, sent a cold shiver through me, and caused me at once to sound the halt." This was the message:—"Buller evacuated Gubat. His main body went to Gakdul with all sick and wounded. He remains with about 1500 men at Abu-Klea. The enemy have now begun to fire into his camp there, and have killed and wounded some of his men. He awaits camels to fall back on Gakdul, which I hope he will begin to do to-morrow, the 21st instant; but owing to the weak state of his camels all his men must go on foot. I have abandoned all hope of going to Berber before the autumn campaign begins. You will therefore not go to Abu-Hamed, but having burned and destroyed everything in the neighbourhood where Stewart was murdered, you will withdraw all your force to Abu-Dom, near Merawi, bringing all the mudir's troops with you.

"Please express to the troops Lord Wolseley's high appreciation of their gallant conduct in action, and of the military spirit they have displayed in overcoming the great difficulties presented by the river. Having punished the Monassir people for Stewart's murder, it is not intended to undertake any further military operations until after the approaching hot season.

"Further orders will be sent to you upon your reaching Abu-Dom. Until you have occupied the Shukook Pass, and made sure of every one through it, you had better keep this telegram entirely to yourself and Butler. Of course, if you are in the presence of the enemy when you receive this, you must defeat him before turning back. If you do not receive this before you have reached Abu-Hamed, or are so near to it that it is merely a question of occupying it without opposition, you must halt there, and send back information at once to me, when I will start the convoy from Korosko, which I do not otherwise mean to despatch.

Of course it is impossible at this distance to give you positive orders, but Lord Wolseley has every confidence in your military discretion."

This could only be interpreted as a recall, and bitter as the disappointment was to officers and men it was evident that events had made it necessary for them to return without delay, since if General Buller had been surrounded by the main body of the Mahdi's followers from Khartûm Lord Wolseley would not have had a sufficient force at Korti to march into the desert to his rescue. General Brackenbury instantly prepared for the return journey after sending the following reply to Lord Wolseley:—

"I received your telegram this morning, just as the troops were starting up river. I am, by the map, about twenty-six miles from Abu-Hamed. I am not in the immediate presence of the enemy, nor have the patrols, who have been six miles beyond this, had any touch of the enemy. Nor do I anticipate meeting the enemy to-day should I continue my advance. My latest information is that the enemy intend to fight at Abu-Hamed, and I anticipate opposition if I advance upon it. There is a cataract between me and Abu-Hamed, and if opposed it might take some days before I could occupy the place. I am confident I could beat any force opposed to me, but I feel it my duty, in view of the facts contained in the first part of your telegram, to fall back immediately to Abu-Dom, and I shall fall back to Hebbeh to-day. I shall return by the right bank."

By returning along the right bank as far as Merawi the general would avoid the danger of opposition in the Shukook Pass, and also the possibility of any large force of the enemy assembling at short notice on that side.

There is no need to follow all the details of the return journey. At noon on that same day the boats commenced to move down-stream led by Colonel Denison commanding the Canadian voyageurs; the column moving in reversed order from its progress up-stream. On the 25th the destruction of the houses and the sakyehs at Hebbeh was completed. On the 26th the advanced guard was concentrated opposite Salamat. On the way down

there were signs of a hasty retreat having been made from Sherri Island, a few native boats and rough rafts were discovered and destroyed, several natives watching our troops from behind distant rocks. The rapids were not passed without the wreck of three boats and much damage to others, which had to be repaired. On the 28th preparations were made for the advance through the Shukook, where it was expected that the boats might be fired upon, but not a single native was seen amidst the rocky cliffs, and though to pass the rapid it was necessary that every boat should be taken down by the voyageurs,—the Gordon Highlanders and headquarters reached Dulka Island the same night, and bivouacked opposite the old camp. There on the 1st of March the troops closed up and the advance was continued to Birti, where the vakeel was in camp and prepared to march with the column near the river.

The voyageurs performed their duty admirably. Some of the rapids required a voyageur for each boat, and as there were but sixty-seven of these men and more than two hundred boats, each man had to make from three to four trips, and in some cases, where two were required, each made seven trips. Many boats had been injured, and on the 4th of March, in passing through the tortuous fourth cataract, two wounded men and a sergeant were drowned by the striking of a boat upon a rock; another wounded man also died during the passage, but the journey was made with marvellous skill and despatch; the troops having descended in nine days a distance which it had taken thirty-one days to ascend, reaching Hamdab on the 4th of March. There a telegram from Korti bearing General Buller's name showed that the desert column had accomplished its retreat from Abu-Klea. This telegram gave instructions that Colonel Butler should be left in command at Abu-Dom with the Black Watch, a troop of hussars, the Egyptian camel corps, two guns of the Egyptian battery, a detachment of engineers, and a hundred transport camels, with all the rations that could be spared, while General Brackenbury took the rest of the column to Korti. The mudir's troops had been halted at Duaim, and were afterwards sent to hold Dugiyet at the entrance of the Berber road.

On the evening of the 6th of March General Brackenbury held a review of the river column—"the first and the last time it was ever inspected on parade. . . . Two thousand of the finest fighting men that it ever was any man's lot to command were inspected in line, marched past, re-formed in line of quarter-columns, and advanced in review order." Having said a few farewell words to commanding officers General Brackenbury bade the column, as the "river column," good-bye.

The voyageurs were drawn up at the flagstaff. Out of 377 men who had left Canada ten had died, six of them having been drowned in the Nile. They had been engaged only for six months, but eighty-nine of them had renewed their service, and of these sixty-seven had gone with the river column, where both their officers and men had worked with untiring vigour and dauntless courage.

On the morning of the 7th of March General Brackenbury started with the main body of his troops for Korti, where he arrived and handed over his command next day.

This then was the end of the double expedition which it was hoped would meet to co-operate for the relief of Khartûm and the rescue of General Gordon, of whose death there was now little doubt on the part of the officers in command, although in England it was not till some time afterwards that the hope was abandoned that he had escaped to the Equatorial provinces, or had found protection with some friendly tribe, or was even kept in durance by the Mahdi himself.

The telegraphic message sent from Cairo by Sir E. Baring to Earl Granville on the afternoon of the 15th of February may be said to contain as much of certainty as any subsequent account of the actual taking of Khartûm and the murder of Gordon, and it was merely a repetition of the message sent from Korti to Cairo by Lord Wolseley earlier on the same day:—

"A cavass of Ibrahim Bey Rushdy left Khartûm fourteen days ago. Rebels entered Khartûm at daylight 26th January, through treachery of Farag Pasha, who opened two gates in south wall. On first alarm cavass went with his master to government

house. They met Gordon, who was armed, coming out, with Mohamed Bey Mustapha and twenty cavasses. When proceeding towards Austrian consulate they met party of rebels, who fired a volley. Gordon fell at once, and two beys were also killed. Hanzel, Austrian consul, was killed in his own house. Nicola, Greek consul, and the doctor are prisoners. Cavass saw the two steamers carrying Sir Charles Wilson's party come up to Omdurman, and gives circumstantial account of what he saw at Khartûm when it was taken by rebels."

We have seen by the evidences to be found in the journals, and more distinctly in the letters sent by Gordon himself by the *Bordein* and received by Sir Charles Wilson,[1] how the fatal meshes were closing round Khartûm, and the farewell words that appeared in the more private of these letters sounded the note of approaching death, especially when it was remembered that Gordon had repeatedly declared that he would never be taken alive.

A despatch sent on the 12th of February by the special correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* at Abu-Kru, contains what appears to be a fair summing up of the native reports.

"General Gordon's trusted messenger, George, a well-known Khartûm Greek merchant, who for months past has been intrusted with all letters passing from or to the besieged, and who has been living on board one of the steamers sent here, states that nearly all the natives' stories agree that General Gordon, on learning that he was betrayed, made a rush for the magazine in the Catholic mission building. Finding that the enemy were actually in possession of that building by the treachery of Faragh, General Gordon returned to government house, and was killed while trying to re-enter it. Some say that he was shot; others that he was stabbed.

The Madhi's people were admitted to Khartûm at ten o'clock on the night of January 26.

George adds that the rebels massacred all the white people, men, women, and children, throwing the bodies into the Nile, many of which corpses he and others saw whilst with Sir Charles Wilson's party.

[1] Vol. iv. pp. 78–88.

The families of all the men on board General Gordon's steamers were also murdered. . . .

Khasm-el-Mus, the commandant with the steamers here, who has proved so loyal throughout, states that even had the English got to Khartûm a month earlier they would have been too late to save Gordon, for the two traitors had committed themselves, and would never have awaited our arrival, as they feared that General Gordon would punish them.

The people of Khartûm had despaired of ever seeing English soldiers, and tried to make the best terms they could. After the battle of Abu-Klea the Mahdi no doubt promised much."

There were many differences in the accounts, but, at the same time, there was a general agreement, and there were numerous discussions and some contention as to the conditions that preceded the taking of Khartûm, and the influences that precipitated the event. Lieutenant-colonel Kitchener was inclined to disbelieve the statement that the place was given up by the treachery of Faragh Pasha, but Colonel Sir Charles Wilson was of opinion that it was he who admitted the Mahdi's troops, though after the 25th, or, at any rate, after the 30th of December the town could not have resisted a determined assault. Sir Charles Wilson and Colonel Kitchener were probably in a position to obtain the most accurate information; and the former, summing up the direct and the most trustworthy of the indirect evidence, points out that, with the exception of the brief message of the 29th of December, 1884, "Khartûm all right, and can hold out for years;" the last authentic news of the siege of Khartûm is contained in General Gordon's journal, which closes on the 14th December, 1884. "Now MARK THIS, if the expeditionary force, and I ask for no more than two hundred men, does not come in ten days, *the town may fall;* and I have done my best for the honour of our country. Good-bye." Sir Charles Wilson goes on to say that the crisis would naturally arrive when the provisions were finished, and Gordon did not expect them to last much longer than the 14th December. From Christmas-day, 1884, to the 20th January, 1885, the garrison lived on coarse bread made from the pith of the palm-tree, on gum, and

on a little tobacco. The fact that General Gordon was able to induce, not only the garrison, but the civilians in the city to hold out for a month under such conditions, is one of the most remarkable features of his defence of Khartûm, and affords the strongest proof of his wonderful influence over natives of all classes.

On the 25th January General Gordon does not appear to have left the palace, but he transacted business with several people; and one man, a Copt, stated that he saw him there six hours after sunset. Before daylight on the 26th the Arabs attacked the lines of Khartûm at the Messalamia gate and met with little or no resistance. Part of the attacking force seems to have passed between Fort Mogrim and the White Nile, over ground left dry by the fall of the river; whilst part crossed the ditch, according to one account, by filling it up with straw, native beds, &c., which the men carried with them as they advanced to the assault; or, according to another account, by filling it up during the night after the connivance of Faragh Pasha and Behnasawi Bey commanding the troops in that quarter. The city was soon in the hands of the Arabs, who, for about three hours, killed every one they met; a crier then went round proclaiming the Aman or General Amnesty, but many Shagiyeh were killed two days afterwards. Some black soldiers held out by the Buri gate until they saw Khartûm was in the hands of the Arabs, and the garrison on Tuti island did not surrender until mid-day. The names of Faragh Pasha and Behnasawi Bey were associated with the act of treachery. Sir Charles Wilson believed that these men, who commanded the troops at the Messalamia gate, knew that an assault was going to be made during the night of the 25th–26th, and that they purposely neglected to take any precautions to resist it; they probably encouraged the soldiers to leave the lines and go into the city to search for food. Sir Charles records that before General Gordon's arrival at Khartûm a deputation headed by Mohammed Bey-el-Jazali had visited the Mahdi at Rahad, and presented to him letters and petitions, signed by persons of all classes at Khartûm, begging an assurance of safety, and expressing readiness to submit. He refers to the fact that according to General Gordon's journal

there appears to have been throughout the siege an influential section of the people in favour of the Mahdi, and he considers that an act of treachery such as that attributed to Faragh was not surprising under the circumstances. Faragh, however, was killed after the capture of Khartûm—as was supposed by the orders of the Mahdi, but Behnasawi was afterwards known to be in high favour.

This is the brief but well-grounded account given by Sir Charles Wilson, who concludes by saying that there were two independent accounts of Gordon's death which in all essential particulars agreed with each other, and appeared to be trustworthy. One was that of the cavass, which was telegraphed in brief by Lord Wolseley to Cairo. This man professed to be an eye-witness, and said: "On hearing the noise I got my master's donkey and went with him to the palace. We met Gordon Pasha at the outer door of the palace. Muhammed Bey Mustafa, with my master, Ibrahim Bey Rushdi, and about twenty cavasses then went with Gordon towards the house of the Austrian consul, Hansal, near the church, when we met some rebels in open space near the outer gate of the palace. Gordon Pasha was walking in front leading the party. The rebels fired a volley, and Gordon was killed at once: nine of the cavasses, Ibrahim Bey Rushdi, and Muhammed Bey Mustafa, were killed, the rest ran away." The messenger who gave the other account was not present, but went to the palace soon after sunrise. His statement was: "Faragh Pasha withdrew the soldiers from the gate near the White Nile and allowed the rebels to enter. Wad en Nejumi and Khalifa Ali led the way; every one was asleep, and before the sun rose the town was full of Arabs. Some went to the palace and met Gordon attended by some of his guard at the gate. Gordon fired his revolver, and the rebels fired a volley, killing Gordon immediately. I saw Gordon lying dead near the palace gate." Sir Charles thought it not unlikely that General Gordon, when he heard that the Arabs had entered the city, tried to reach the church where the ammunition was stored, and that he intended either to try and hold out there until the relief expedition arrived, or to blow up the magazine and prevent

its falling into the hands of the Mahdi. Gordon was killed a few moments after he had quitted the palace gate, and it would appear that, according to the barbarous custom of the Soudan, his head was struck off and exposed at Omdurman.

Of course there were other stories, some of them wild enough; and a Greek, who represented that he had escaped in the Mahdi's uniform and reached Berber, appeared at Dongola with a tale in which he reported that an Arab had gone up into the room where Gordon was reading the Bible and had there killed him, cut off his head and stuck it on a spear to convey it to the Mahdi. A narrative of two other refugees, representing themselves to be soldiers of Gordon's army who were taken and sold as slaves, is so characteristic that it is worth noting so far as a few extracts are concerned.

"That night Khartûm was delivered into the hands of the rebels. It fell through the treachery of the accursed Faragh Pasha, the Circassian, who opened the gate. May he never reach Paradise! May Shaytan take possession of his soul! But it was Kismet. The gate was called 'Buri.' It was on the Blue Nile. We were on guard near, but did not see what was going on. We were attacked and fought desperately at the gate. Twelve of us were killed and twenty-two retreated to a high room, where we were taken prisoners. . . .

A cry arose, 'To the palace! to the palace!' A wild and furious band rushed towards it, but they were resisted by the black troops, who fought desperately. They knew there was no mercy for them, and that even were their lives spared they would be enslaved, and the state of the slave, the perpetual bondage with hard taskmasters, is worse than death. Slaves are not treated well, as you think; heavy chains are round their ankles and middle, and they are lashed for the least offence till blood flows. We had fought for the Christian pasha and for the Turks, and we knew that we should receive no mercy. We, the party I was with, could not help being taken prisoners. The house was set on fire. The fight raged, and the slaughter continued till the streets were slippery with blood. The rebels rushed onward to the palace. We

saw a mass rolling to and fro, but did not see Gordon Pasha killed. He met his fate as he was leaving the palace near the large tree which stands on the esplanade. The palace is not a stone's-throw, or at any rate a gunshot distance, from the Austrian consul's house. He was going in that direction, to the magazine on the Kenniseh, a long way off. We did not hear what became of his body, nor did we hear that his head was cut off; but we saw the head of the traitor Faragh, who met with his deserts. We have heard that it was the blacks that ran away, and that the Egyptian soldiers fought well; that is not true. They were craven. Had it not been for them, in spite of the treachery of many within the town, the Arabs would not have got in, for we watched the traitors. And now fearful scenes took place in every house and building, in the large market-place, in the small bazaars. There were the same terrible scenes in the dwellings where the window-sills and door-lintels were painted azrek (blue), where there had been many feasts and fantasias, where merissa had flowed in plenty, and where the walls were built of wahál, and the roof built of dhoora stalk. Men were slain shrieking for mercy, when mercy was not in the hearts of our savage enemies. Women and children were robbed of their jewels of gold and jewels of silver, of their bracelets, necklaces of precious stones, and carried off to be sold to the Bishareen merchants as slaves. Yes, and white women too—Egyptians and Circassians. Mother and daughter alike were dragged off from their homes of comfort. These were widows, wives, and daughters of Egyptian officers, some of whom had been killed with Hicks Pasha; wives and children of Egyptian merchants formerly rich, owning ships and mills, gardens and shops. These were sold afterwards, some for 340 thaleries or more, some for 250, according to age and good looks. And the poor black women, already slaves, and their children were taken off too. These were sold too, for a hundred, eighty, or seventy thaleries. Their husbands and masters were slain before their eyes; and yet I hear it said there was no massacre at the taking of Khartûm! They lie who say so, and are in league with Mahomet Achmet. You must not believe all that men coming from Omdurman tell you. Mahomet Achmet and the

dervishes send you false reports of everything, and you believe them; then they laugh. This fighting and spilling of blood continued till the sun rode high in the sky—red, yet darkened by smoke and dust. There was riot and clamour, hubbub and wrangling over spoil; cursing was heard till the hour of evening prayer, but the muezzin was not called; neither were any prayers offered up at the mosque on that dark day in the annals of Khartûm. But the history of those scenes will not be written on its records; for all scrolls and papers and books in the archives were destroyed and scattered abroad. Yet the howling herd, . . . the screeching devils bespattered with gore, swarming about in droves and bands, found not the plunder that they had been promised or had expected. Then they were exasperated. Their fury knew no bounds, and they sought out Faragh Pasha; but he was with the dervishes. He had presented himself to them as one deserving well of honour and rewards. 'Where is the hidden treasure of the Greek merchants and Bachalees; of Leontides and Georgio Themetrio? Yes, and of the Franchesi Marquèt; of the Italian Michaelo? We know that you are acquainted with the secret hiding-place. Where are all the thaleries of Marcopolo and of the German tailor Klein? We know that those that left Khartûm were unable to carry away their silver, and you know where it is hid.'

The dervishes, seeing the tumult, questioned him sharply and addressed him thus: 'The long-expected One, our Lord, desires to know where the English pasha hid his wealth. We know he was very rich, and every day paid large sums of money; this has not been concealed from our lord. Now, therefore, let us know, that we may bear him word where all the 'felluce' he gave the troops is hidden, so that we may put it into the treasury. Let him be bound and examined in the inner chamber.'

Then were the doors of the house where the dervishes were, and the gates of the gardens outside—they were in the Jeneseh—closed against the Arab soldiery, and they were driven out, though angry words and threats were loudly heard. Faragh was now questioned, but he swore by Allah and by the souls of his fathers

back to three generations that Gordon had no money, and that he knew of no hidden money or treasure. 'You lie,' cried the dervishes. 'You wish after a while to come here, dig, and get it all for yourself.'

'If the Inglezze had no money or silver, how did he make all those silver medals we have seen?'

'Most of them are lead,' Faragh replied, 'and he paid every one with paper.' 'It is false,' they replied, 'and now have a care; listen to what we are going to say to you. We are sure you know where the money lies concealed. We are not careful of your life, for you have betrayed the man whose salt you had eaten; you have been the servant of the infidel, and you have betrayed even him. Unless you unfold this secret of the buried treasure, you shall surely die.'

But Faragh, it is said—for we were not there—seeing that his end was approaching, that his words were not believed, assumed a proud and haughty bearing, and an attitude of defiance.

'I care not,' he said, 'for your threats. I have told the truth, Allah knows. There is no money, neither is there treasure. You are magnoons (blockheads) to suppose there is money; but if there were you would not divide it fairly among your followers—to every one his portion. You would keep it among yourselves. I have done a great deed. I have delivered to your lord and master the city, which you could never have taken without my help. You would have been beaten back from the trenches by the Inglezze, who, even now, await their time to punish you; and I have secrets regarding these, which, if I die, will die with me. I tell you again there is no treasure, but you will rue the day if you kill me.'

One among the dervishes then stepped forward, and struck him, bound as he was, in the mouth, telling him to cease his fool's prophecies; while another, incensed, rushed at him and struck him on the back of his neck with his two-edged sword, so that with one blow his head fell from his shoulders.

So perished the arch-traitor—may his soul be afflicted! But as for Gordon Pasha, the magnanimous, may his soul be 'enjoying fuller knowledge!'

I say nearly all the Egyptian men were slain in spite casting themselves down and praying for mercy. Faragh head was then carried off to Mahomet Achmet. We he: when the Kordofan soldiers, who guarded us at the Dorm talked among themselves. We were there for some days; nothing; but only heard what these soldiers told us. Tl two steamers with English had come up and gone back."

This is an example of some of the stories told, but w most credible were listened to and the evidence sifted, t clusion at which Sir Charles Wilson arrived seemed to be one; and—to quote the words with which he closes his r "for more than ten long weary months the wild tribes Soudan were kept in check by the genius, the indomitable tion, and the fertile resources of one man; and long al controversies of the present day have been forgotten, the of Khartûm by General Gordon will be looked upon as one most memorable military achievements of modern times."

# CHAPTER X.

## CONCLUSION.

The Suakim Expedition. Contract for the Railway. Arrangements for Forces in the Summer. Plan of the Campaign. Osman Digma: fighting near Suakim. Kassala. Skirmishes and Engagements. Hasheen. Tamai. Withdrawal of Troops from Egypt. Death of the Mahdi. His Successor. Change of Ministry in England. Results of the Suakim Expedition. Consequences of British Intervention in Egypt.

Though the present page commences with the arrangements made for commencing a new campaign in the Eastern Soudan and for concentrating fresh troops at Suakim, the story of the remarkable episode of our intervention in Egypt may be said to draw to a close. The fall of Khartûm and the death of Gordon had been a tragic solution of the problem that had so long engaged the attention of our government, and the original propositions for the protection of Suakim and the Red Sea territory against the hostile attempts of Osman Digma and the tribes who followed him, and were still occupying a portion of the desert country beyond Suakim, had been reverted to. That there would be considerable difficulty in inflicting a thorough defeat on this truculent lieutenant of the Mahdi had already been proved. He commanded a horde of savage fanatics, by whom life seemed to be held of little account when they once determined to make a furious onslaught, and the nature of the country made it exceedingly difficult for our troops to follow them when they retreated into the mountains or the wild and arid recesses of the desert.

There was considerable uncertainty as to the real power and influence of the Mahdi. His brother-in-law, who had been made prisoner at Esneh and taken down to Cairo, declared that Achmed would not fight Turkish troops, but would endeavour to make common cause with them for the expulsion of all foreigners; but he also denied that the Mahdi assumed any religious apostleship, and declared that he was only defending his country against exorbitant taxation and the suppression of the slave-trade. This, of course, was false as far as the denial of religious assumption was concerned; but the question remained how far the English ministry was justified in carrying on the war in the southern provinces. It was obvious enough that members of the government and prominent representatives of the Liberal interest were strongly opposed to a continuance of the occupation of the Soudan by British troops. Mr. Courtney and Mr. John Morley had declared that though while Gordon lived it was our obvious duty to use every effort for his rescue, if he were dead we ought to return to the position contemplated when Lord Wolseley's instructions were drafted, and when he was ordered to take no further offensive

measures after the rescue of Gordon and Stewart. Otherwise, it was argued, we should find ourselves embarked on an endless enterprise—nothing less than the conquest and the permanent occupation of the Soudan—a territory half as big as Europe, and with such vast spaces of almost impassable desert, and such a climate, that to hold it with European troops would be a task beyond reasonable contemplation.

At the same time it was felt to be impossible that we should withdraw our forces from Egypt, and though France was still "nagging" and protesting against our continued occupation, even French politicians of liberal and statesmanlike views acknowledged that, as we did not occupy Egypt for the sake of Turkey, or for the purpose of propitiating any other European power, but had found ourselves there for the protection of our own and European interests, for the purpose of maintaining the established government and suppressing rebellion, and with the general concurrence of other European powers, we could not evacuate the country until something had been effected towards the end that we had had in view. It could scarcely be denied that the opinions of those who, having been well acquainted with the nature of the Soudanese sheikhs, declared that non-intervention was the best policy, because the chiefs would soon quarrel with the Mahdi and among themselves, and the revolt would end in tribal hostilities and consequently would die out, were already to some extent being verified. There were rumours of serious defections among the rebel host, and it soon became evident that the rebellion in the south was likely to fall to pieces, and that the most important factor with which we had to deal was the hostility of the tribes on the borders of the Red Sea and about Suakim and Kassala. Osman Digma, in fact, was likely to become a more formidable foe than the Mahdi, and the character and antecedents of the man himself were significant. It appears that the Digma family were previously rich and influential; but on the abolition of the slave-trade they suffered severe losses, and some of them were imprisoned for being implicated in dealing in slaves, so that the family gradually became poor and in debt. In 1877 Ali Digma, one of the brothers, was caught by her Majesty's ship *Wild Swan*, with ninety-six slaves off Sheek Beragoot, a small harbour about 30 miles north of Suakim, and in consequence Osman's family suffered a loss of at least £1000.

Osman Digma, the head of the family, then became a broker in the town of Berber, and occasionally went to Suakim to sell merchandise of various kinds. In 1882 he brought ostrich feathers and shipped them to Jeddah, remaining there himself, and staying about six months. He then left for Khartûm, afterwards going to Kordofan, where he remained some months, and then returned to Erkowit about the 23d Ramadan, or the 28th of July, 1883, bringing letters from the Mahdi to Tewfik Bey, the governor of Suakim, the prefect of Sinkat and Tokar, Mohamed-el-Amien, sheikh of

the Erkowit tribes, and Said Ahmed-el-Shingety, the mufti of the council at Suakim.

At the beginning of August news was received of his being at Erkowit, and an attempt was made to arrest him. Later in the month he collected a force for the purpose of attacking Sinkat. He was, however, repulsed with a loss of eighty men, including Ahmed Digma and his son, who were his brother and nephew, and he himself was wounded in two places.

After this defeat most of the tribes left him, and he could only muster about one hundred and fifty men in all. In September his followers were reduced to about seventy-five, and he then went from place to place trying to obtain the confidence of the tribes a second time.

In October Major Mohammed Khilil, in command of two companies of infantry, was defeated in a mountain pass on the Abeint road to Sinkat, about 30 miles from Suakim, and only twenty-five men escaped. After that time Osman Digma's prestige continued to increase.

The slave-trade was his chief source of wealth; and he had such great influence with many of the native chiefs, that in spite of his subsequent reverses they remained for a long time faithful to him. He represented their commercial interests—or they thought so; and he, like his relation the Mahdi, and, indeed, like most of the Soudanese chiefs, was an accomplished liar, in fact he was said to have attained the very highest distinction in an art which elicits the admiration of the Oriental races.

Osman Digma maintained a defiant attitude although he had been badly beaten by the garrison at Kassala, who had sent out a force in search of provisions, the men intrenching themselves, covering the trenches with long grass. The rebels attacked them without knowing of the intrenchment, and were defeated, a large number of them being killed—report said three thousand,—a result which so enraged Osman Digma that he was reported to have killed the messenger who carried the tidings. Kassala had a garrison of three thousand men, including a battalion which had seen much service, but their position was growing almost desperate, so closely was the place invested by the rebels, and though Colonel Chermside endeavoured to pass a supply of cartridge-fillers and other things into the place, the people who were shut up there were in hourly apprehension after having held out for more than a year. But the tribes in that district continued to be loyal, owing, it was said, to the action of Said Morghani, and as it was rumoured that Osman Digma intended to make a sudden assault on Suakim itself before the arrival of the additional forces from England, it was believed that, at anyrate, the active operations that were on foot there would draw the rebels away from the neighbourhood of Kassala and from Massowa, where the Italian and Egyptian flags were afterwards hoisted at the citadel, the Italian commander taking entire charge of the administration of the place.

The news that a large British force was on its way to Suakim and that an advance was to be made to Berber caused much excitement, and the news was circulated as much as possible among the tribesmen of the surrounding country in order to induce those who were wavering to throw in their lot with us. At Suakim itself the Royal Engineers had carried out some very useful work after the arrival of General Fremantle. At Quarantine Island piers or landing-stages had been erected where large steamers could discharge cargo with great facility. The rebels, who used to creep up towards Suakim and conceal themselves in a kind of plantation of palm-trees and shrubs called Osman Digma's gardens, just outside the town, could no longer find permanent shelter there, as the electric light at one of the forts could be thrown upon the place, which presented a beautiful appearance under the brilliant illumination. This enabled the gunners to direct their fire upon any spot where the enemy might endeavour to assemble. Before the arrival of any part of the new expedition Osman Digma was concentrating his troops at Tamai, where he was said to have from ten to twelve thousand men, while an advanced body of rebels two thousand strong occupied Hassein (or Hasheen). The news of the fall of Khartûm had reached the rebels in the camp, and had filled them with exultation and with a determination to resist our advance by digging trenches, forming rifle-pits, throwing up breast-works, and making shelters along the sides of the nullahs.

It will be seen that the construction of a railway from Suakim to Berber, even though it was to be completed only by five-mile sections, protected as it progressed by sand-bag or other batteries and a sufficient force, was likely to be a difficult enterprise; but the first instalment of railway plant and material was already prepared, the well-known firm of Messrs. Lucas and Aird having been chosen as contractors, or rather as "agents," who according to the actual reading of the minute issued by the government were to construct "for the war department for the purposes of the expeditionary force sent out to Suakim, and, according to the orders and under the control of the general officer for the time being in command of the same force, a 4 ft. 8½ in. gauge single line of railway from Suakim, and thence in sections to so far towards Berber as may from time to time be ordered in writing by the secretary of state, and also an 18-in. gauge single line of railway in or about Suakim as may from time to time be ordered by the secretary of state. The war department engages to keep the way clear and the working-staff protected." The agents were to supply plant and working-staff, and with regard to the latter were at liberty, with the consent of the war secretary, to employ natives as labourers. The staff was to be paid by the government, and rationed and clothed by the war department. If any of the working staff should be killed by the enemy in the Soudan, or die from wounds, or from the effect of the climate, his

representatives were to be entitled to a gratuity equal to one year's pay. The agents were to receive a commission of two per cent upon all expenditure by the war department, such commission, however, not to exceed in the whole £20,000; and they were to be entitled to a further sum not exceeding £20,000 if the railways should be satisfactorily completed in the judgment of the secretary of state. There was a condition that the contract should not be sub-let.

The extent of the railway had been computed at 280 miles. In the face of an enemy nothing like an actual contract could have been entered into, and the position occupied by Messrs. Lucas and Aird was only that of agents of the government. The advance into the country and the plotting out of the course of the line were to be accomplished by the Royal Engineers and a military force under an officer of the highest rank. The country rises gradually from the sea-coast to Ariab, where a fortified post of some magnitude was likely to be established. As the military force advanced the agents' navvies, having under them hired native men of the district, would make the needful cuttings and clearances, and lay the line in a substantial manner at the rate of from twenty to twenty-five miles a week, if all went favourably and well. As the line was laid the constructors' locomotives were to traverse it, bringing up stores and materials. At this rate the entire line would occupy rather over fourteen weeks, or, taking into consideration very probable delays, it was expected that the railway from Suakim to Berber would occupy in its completion about four or five months, and that troops and stores would be passed over it in the autumn, or about July or August. The plant and materials for the construction were to be sent out by government transports in sections, each perfectly complete with sleepers, rails, points, and crossings. A couple of hundred picked navvies and platelayers were ready to sail. The route determined upon followed the sites of numerous wells, and it was decided to convey water to the line when possible by a system of pipes.

This, then, was the line which was not only to open the route to Berber, and so give us a military position that would, at all events, secure the protection of the Eastern Soudan, but would eventually open up the country to commerce and be instrumental in inaugurating a new era. Of course a large staff of engineers and clerks was required as well as the navvies and workmen, and the material necessary for a section of five miles included a locomotive, ballast trucks, a large number of broad and narrow trolleys, two of which were for the electric light, twelve water-tanks, six steam-boilers, six pumps, some 14,000 feet of water-pipe of various sizes, 830 tons of rails, 15,000 sleepers, numbers of points and crossings, fifty tons of cement, deals, timbers, planks and boarding, a vast quantity of tools and apparatus, coal, clothing, furniture, detonating material, portable and other engines, besides three huts and a supply of

provisions, clothing, furniture, water-condensing apparatus, and innumerable fittings and appliances.

All was soon ready, however, and Mr. Charles Lucas, jun., and Mr. Basil Ellis started for the seat of war in the same mail steamer, from Brindisi, that was to carry General Sir G. Graham. This arrived at Alexandria on the 26th of February, and they immediately went on to Cairo, where, however, the general was detained for a short time because of an accidental injury to his ankle, which prevented him reaching Suakim till the 12th of March, when he arrived in the *Lydian Monarch* with the 5th Royal Irish Lancers.

At that time the arrangements for the troops under Lord Wolseley, during the summer, were to make Dongola the headquarters, the main body of the force remaining in camp at Korti; the mudir's troops to be stationed at Merawi, with, perhaps, the Black Watch, a troop of hussars, and two guns. Two movable columns were to be formed ready to take the field at any moment, one of them consisting of General Dormer's brigade of three battalions of infantry, a troop of hussars, and four guns, to be encamped near Debbeh; the other, under the command of General Brackenbury, to be posted somewhere between Debbeh and Handak; and the heavy camel corps to be encamped opposite the Hannek Cataracts. The troops were to be provided with huts of mud and reeds, as in the summer months the heat, already increasing, would be insupportable.

For some time previously the rebels, though they had ceased to make night attacks on Suakim, had showed amazing audacity in creeping down the gullies at night and filling up the trenches of the advanced works after the fatigue parties had retired for the day. It was therefore determined to lay some small mines outside the line of the advanced redoubts; but even these were unavailing, for the Arabs contrived to enter the works without exploding them. Lieutenant Askwith of the engineers, who was charged with the mining operations, therefore went out to examine and make some alterations in them, when that which he was examining exploded and blew him to pieces. This accident caused much sorrow in the camp, for the officer had been remarkable for his zeal and energy, and had taken an active part in all the work performed by the engineers since the departure of General Graham's former expedition. But another series of attacks exhibiting still greater audacity and cunning on the part of the enemy soon began to disturb the camp, the plan and disposition of which was not such as to secure it against night surprises. The formation of the camp placed the Guards brigade, consisting of the Coldstreams, Scots Guards, and Grenadiers, in rear of the west redoubt, a small fort which formed the most advanced post on the Suakim-Berber road; behind them was the Berkshire Regiment, and on the left of the Guards brigade was a large unoccupied gap; then came the camps of the Shropshire and East Surrey

Regiments, and then another gap between them and the right water fort. A line drawn between the west redoubt and the right water fort would have represented the front, but there was no continuity of the camps that lay along it; and the same may be said of the right flank, represented by a line from the west redoubt to the ordnance store, when there was a great gap between the ordnance store and the nearest camp. A third line from the water fort to the camp of the Indian contingent south-west of the town may be said to have represented the left flank, with a great gap facing the south. In rear of these advanced lines were the marines, royal horse artillery, hussars, headquarters camp, and camp of the army hospital corps, separated by considerable spaces, intersected by shallow gullies, through which the lithe and half-naked savages could silently creep into the camps undeterred by the line of pickets, which was also broken into too wide intervals to prevent the enemy from stealing in at night, while when an alarm was given each camp was in danger from the fire of the next, and the Arabs having speared or stabbed some of our sleeping men in the tents, or made a sudden rush on a body of those who were resting and off duty, would escape in the darkness, mostly carrying away their own dead and wounded. The electric light which was turned on from the *Dolphin* only served to throw up into strong relief every tent of the camp and every moving figure for a few seconds, and then left everything in blacker darkness than before.

On the 7th March the assassinations were commenced by some Arabs who crept into the lines of the headquarter camp and stole the provost-marshal's horse, after stabbing his servant in five places. The screams of the poor fellow roused the men, and the officers of the staff were all rushing about in confusion. After this more precautions were taken, but the disposition of the camp precluded any really effective measures, and when our men turned out and began to fire, their bullets were often as dangerous to their neighbouring comrades as to the enemy.

It was a harassing time. The heat, almost unbearable, was aggravated by sand-storms which filled the eyes and plastered the faces of the men with fine dust that stuck in a pasty deposit to their perspiring skins. There was, on the whole, no serious want of water, and even when the advance was made the men were on a fair allowance. The condensing apparatus was set to work, the wells were deepened, and a regular water-transport service was organized under the command of Major De Cosson, who with his staff of assistants set himself to this most necessary work with untiring energy and great success.

In Suakim itself stores had been opened by some Greeks, where both eatables and drinkables could be procured at a comparatively reasonable rate; but of course in camp, and especially at the advanced posts, there were few luxuries, and the supply of ordinary rations was all that could be

secured. Not only did the intense heat and the dust or fine sand exhaust the men, but the stench of the dead bodies of men and camels that pervaded the camp was sickening. The corpses of our own slain were buried, but it was not possible to bury those of the Arabs, which lay at a distance and in various directions. The shifting sand, too, would not for any length of time cover a dead camel unless at a very great depth, and sometimes in a few hours the wind would lay bare portions of putrefying carcasses, to which earth would have acted as a deodorizer and resolvent, but on which the sand had no effect except to conceal the rotting mass until it was dried to a hard mummy. Suakim, with its Arab graveyard, its collection of offal and decaying rubbish, and its dirty streets, was bad enough; the camel depôt, with its multitude of groaning beasts crowded together and giving forth their own peculiar stench, was not pleasant; but the camp presented almost inevitable difficulties in maintaining a sanitary condition. It was not till the carcasses of the camels that had died or were slain by the enemy were hauled for some distance beyond the camp in the direction of the wind, and there buried, that the air was cleared of what seemed to threaten to add pestilence to the fever and exhaustion that came of constant exertion, intense and almost unmitigated heat, broken rest, anxiety, and the hardships of camp life in a climate where the work of forming a line of railway, advancing on a savage and unscrupulous foe, and fighting a series of battles, was to be achieved by a force of between 8000 and 9000 men of various arms, aided by about 2000 drivers, labourers, grass-cutters, and others.

On the night of the 11th March a few shots were heard along the front, a circumstance so common that the men who were not in that direction turned in as usual. Only for a short time, however, for there was soon a sound of rushing feet, a hoarse cry to turn out, the sound of bugles, and the pickets coming in, while flashes of the rifles and the *whish* of the bullets went all along the line, soon to become a fast and continuous firing, amidst which the guns of the *Dolphin* boomed, their shots going into the desert, and the electric light flashed out, throwing all the tents, the groups of men at their posts, and the various objects of the camp into momentary definition; while the rifle bullets were cutting the ground, and sentries, returning patrols, and men in opposing directions were in extreme danger of shooting each other in mistake for the enemy, both before and after the sudden illumination. The enemy had made a general assault all round, and the ordnance store had been marked for special attack while the skirmish was going on. That attack was led by a gigantic negro who had formerly been a porter at the wharf at Suakim, and was now under the name of Abdul Ahad ("Abdul the Lion"), standard-bearer to Osman Digma. The locality of the ordnance store and depôt was well known to the enemy, and they were not slow to perceive that if it could be destroyed our troops would be

placed at a serious disadvantage. The officer in charge of the store had posted his guards, retired to his tent and gone to bed, the guard was sleeping in the guard tent, and the sentries were pacing up and down listening to the sound of the firing a mile and a half away, and not suspecting that any Arabs would come from the expanse of desert on the north side of the store, which was commanded by the guns of the ships. A dark figure suddenly came out from the shadow of the pier, and to the challenge "Who goes there?" the reply came "Friend," probably from the gigantic negro, who had, no doubt, learned a few words of English when he worked at the wharf at Suakim. At anyrate, while the sentry hesitated the black was upon him and cut him down with one of those terrible two-handed swords which, wielded by powerful arms, will cut half through wood and metal of a rifle stock, and will shear off a head at a single blow. Another sentry, who ran up to help his comrade, was also killed, and about fifty Arabs, who had by that time crept round the shore under shadow of the pier, bounded forward and made a rush for the guard tent. But the men inside were not of the stuff to be taken so easily. They were men of the Berkshire Regiment, and though there were but fifteen of them, and in the desperate struggle that ensued one was killed and nine were wounded, they closed with the enemy, who, finding that they were being beaten, ran from the tent, and skirting the camp, which they entered at another point, rushed through the store stabbing at all they came near; and finally retreated, carrying with them their dead and wounded. But the body of their leader, the gigantic Abdul Ahad, who had been killed by a bayonet thrust, they left behind in their haste, for they had heard the sound of a boat being lowered from the *Dolphin*, and at the same moment the electric light flashed out. It appears that a rumour, of course unfounded, had reached the rebel camp that the Sikhs burned the bodies of their slain enemies; and it was reported that Osman Digma, who bitterly lamented the loss of his standard-bearer, offered not only to pay a considerable sum of money, but to put an end to all further night attacks, if the body were restored to him, as it is regarded as a reproach to an Arab to be called "a son of a burned father."

The attempts of small parties of the enemy to crawl into the camp were continued, and on two or three occasions they succeeded in getting into a tent after watching the sentry to the end of his beat, and having stabbed the men of the guard who were lying asleep, vanished in the black Egyptian darkness before the death screams of their victims had ceased to startle and horrify the camp. Major De Cosson says: "The nearly naked Hadendowas, with bare feet and greased skins, as dusky as the night, crept and glided on their faces along every hollow and gully, carefully taking advantage of each bush or tuft of reeds that could screen their approach, and, if alarmed, lying perfectly still after casting the sand with a rapid noiseless motion over their prostrate bodies, so that the keenest eye could

hardly detect them from a stone. When they wished to make a sign to each other they imitated the cry of the desert birds with marvellous fidelity, and often has this low plaintive cry been the signal for their onslaught. Sometimes it was a volley followed by a rush with swords and spears, but more often a dark figure would seem to rise out of the very ground at the sentry's feet and stab him in the back; or if it was impossible to get sufficiently near to him unperceived they would wait till he moved away on his beat, knowing well his exact position by the crunching of his heavy ammunition boots on the gravel, and wriggling past like serpents slip among the tents; then would follow the death scream, the rush of feet, and fierce volleys poured in rapid succession into the night after a few shadowy forms disappearing in the darkness, content at having achieved their work of murder and mutilation. This would be the signal for a general alarm along the whole line; the Arabs further out in the desert would open fire with their Remingtons, bullets would come whizzing into the camp in all directions, and the force be kept on the alert until the long hours of the night passed away and the sun rose on another day of incessant work at the wharves and trenches for men who had enjoyed no sleep."

After the arrival of General Graham on the 12th March many changes were made on the position and relative situation of the camps, by which the danger caused by these night attacks was much diminished; and still later, defences were constructed at certain points, including stockades or seribas of the thorny mimosa, rope and wire entanglements, and trenches formed for shelter.

On the 16th March the laying of the railway was commenced, and the camp was entirely remodelled. Sir Gerald Graham's despatch from headquarters to Lord Hartington said that spies had reported Tamai to be held by about 7000 men, and that a force of 1000 to 1200 was at Hasheen, while Tokar was held by a small force, and Handoub probably by a weak detachment. The 20th Hussars had disembarked that day. The artillery, the mounted infantry, and the Australian contingent had not arrived, and the horse-artillery battery was incomplete. As soon as the force was complete and the water transport and field storage arrangements were fully organized he intended to move at once. There was great difficulty in obtaining a sufficient supply of water-tanks and tins; but on Major De Cosson being asked if he would undertake to put 13,000 gallons of water into the field at daybreak on the 20th he said he would, and the task was completed though sufficient men could not be spared—or *were not* spared—to assist in the work, and the officers and some Egyptian soldiers lent for the purpose by Colonel Chermside, the governor-general of the Red Sea littoral, were not particularly effective.

Though at this date the professed plan of campaign was promptly to

construct the railway in detachments which would allow complete protection to be afforded to the work as it went on, and strong posts to be established both at the furthest points to which it progressed and at the base of supplies, there were signs that this plan might have to be deferred, and that, though a small portion of the line would be completed, the advance of the troops from the camp at Suakim to engage the forces of Osman Digma would be made without waiting for the concurrent construction of the line to the point where an engagement might take place.

The services of some scouts belonging to friendly tribes were utilized, two of them being at night posted in each redoubt. Their keen sight rendered them valuable assistants to our sentries. Half of the men of each battalion and regiment were kept under arms all night.

There was every reason why an advance should be made at once. It was essential that as a first step Osman Digma—who it was reported was about to be reinforced by 7000 dervishes—should be defeated and his forces dispersed. In the second place, the intended line of the railway must coincide with the line of advance in order that the construction of the line might be protected. In the third place, it was desirable that the troops should be quartered during the summer in a healthy elevated spot well supplied with water. Sinkat or Ariab were regarded as the places best adapted for Sir Gerald Graham's immediate destination. The road to Sinkat passed near the spot where Osman Digma's force was for the most part concentrated, and where, apparently, he meant to accept battle. It was formerly a summer resort of the inhabitants of Suakim, is 3088 feet above the level of the sea, and is in every way fitted for a summer cantonment. Its distance from Suakim is about forty miles. Tamai is not quite half-way.

As we have seen, from Suakim Island the road crosses a causeway to the mainland, leading thence in a south-westerly direction to the wells about a mile inland which supply the town with water, and are the point of departure for the caravan route, which, for eleven miles, in a north-westerly direction crosses a level plain covered with gravel and small boulders. This plain, rising slightly from the sea, is traversed by the beds of numerous torrents which flow from the mountains during the rains. As the surface is stony and the slope gentle these water-courses are never deep or abrupt, and the only vegetation is that of the small acacia scattered over the plain. On reaching Handoub, 12½ miles, the road passes the first point of a high spur which runs out from the main range of the Waratab Mountains towards the coast. The wells of Handoub are in the lower features of the spur; there are five wells, one of sweet water, the others with brackish. In the bed of the Khor the wells are 18 inches deep and are also brackish. This is the Hadendowa country; and for five miles further the route continues across the same hard, barren, boulder-strewed plain to a point

where the Wady Otao debouches on to the coast plains. To enter the mountain pass on the way to Sinkat is a refreshing change from the arid heat of the desert, as the journey is 3000 feet above sea-level, and on the sides of the mountains towards the sea there are many plants and shrubs, but the other side consists of bare rocks with only the lowest parts of the valleys covered with any verdure. Passing through such valleys Sinkat is reached, some forty miles from Suakim, and it was thought that the army would penetrate to this place and there take up summer quarters. The line of railway—the line from Suakim to Berber, had, however, to be considered, and this route was to Handoub and thence to Otao, 4½ miles from Handoub and 17 from Suakim, where the way passes into the mountains, the under-features on either side being from ¾ mile to 2¾ miles distant, rocky and abrupt, while the view behind them is limited by rugged mountains rising to 1000 and 1500 feet above sea-level. The wady is little more than the boulder bed of a mountain torrent, the two wells of brackish water being ordinarily about enough for 250 men and as many horses.

About four miles further the Wady Sinkat is reached, inclosed by high and rugged mountains; but the next point in the route which was the proposed course of the advance is Tambouk, 10½ miles from Otao.

At the time that the railway from Suakim was commenced there were already evidences that active measures might be ordered for the purpose of forcing Osman Digma to come to a battle. The hot season was advancing, the forces under Lord Wolseley had been reduced by battle and sickness, and there was much fear that they might be still further diminished by remaining in such a climate; while people who knew what the summer around Suakim was like, urgently declared that our army there would melt away with fever and exhaustion unless steps were taken to occupy some position where the temperature would be more suited to Europeans. Added to this a political crisis appeared to be approaching. The government still held its own, but proposals for votes of censure, though they are not carried, have a certain significance, and there were troubles in Burmah, troubles on the Afghan frontier, small troubles in Canada where rebel half-breeds were committing atrocities, troubles still in Ireland.

Sagacious people began to discern that it would be best for all concerned, for Egypt and for England, to make some decisive effort to defeat Osman Digma, and then reverting to the original policy of leaving Khartûm and the Southern Soudan, and retaining only a sufficient force to hold Suakim and the Red Sea coast, with the Italians at Massowa, and, as it was hoped, with friendly tribes aided by Abyssinians and our old acquaintance Ras Aloula, holding the country round Kassala, to retire our army from Suakim and from other places, after providing for the protection of the Egyptian territory at Wady Halfa, and at other points within the

CAMP OF THE SCOTS GUARDS AT OTAO. SUAKIM-BERBER RAILWAY.

APRIL, 1885.

boundary originally settled before we had consented to interpose by sending Gordon to Khartûm.

There were, of course, strong objections to the adoption of a course which appeared to be an acknowledgment of weakness and failure. What should we have accomplished after all the preparation, the expenditure of energy which had surmounted what seemed to be insuperable natural obstacles, battles in which our men had defeated their savage foes, the despatch of a small heroic army which, after having done so much, was to learn that its sacrifices, its determined and conspicuous valour, had been a mere empty display, and that it was to accept what looked like final defeat from an enemy who could not be reached, but whose power had been shown in the desert, at Metammeh, at Kirbekan, and on the Red Sea coast. The power was that of savage attacks and retreats which would wear out a disciplined host by the mere repetition of fights that were not actual engagements, but mere wild onslaughts, to be repelled, defeated, and repeated for days and weeks and months at every point to which we might advance with the intention of provoking the enemy to bring a force into the field and fight a decisive battle.

It is no part of the province of this narrative to discuss the question of the campaign, nor to say more than has been noted already in previous pages of the contentions that the expedition to the Soudan was, in the first instance, too small, too late, and too indefinitely authorized.

In March, 1885, the situation was doubtful, but there was at the same time a general feeling that the campaign would be resumed in the autumn, and that something would yet be done to "smash the Mahdi" and Osman Digma. For the British troops in the Soudan the prospect was not a very pleasant one for the next five or six months. A summer in the Soudan desert was more to be dreaded than all the Mahdi's forces in battle array. Of course, it must and could be done. British troops faced the fierce heat of the Indian plains during the Mutiny, and they could do so in the Soudan; but the long weary months of inactivity in mud huts under the sweltering heat of the desert were enough to dismay any but the stoutest hearts.

Those who believed that the expedition should not be abandoned because of the fall of Khartûm and the death of General Gordon, argued that the probable plan of campaign would be to establish fortified camps along the Nile banks from Merawi to Abu Fatmeh or Dongola. Mud huts to be built and the healthiest spots chosen for the camp. The positions whence the caravan routes terminate at the river to be held in force, and every effort made to have everything in readiness for an advance in the autumn. The railway from Wady Halfa to be pushed on as far as possible, probably to Absarat, so as to pass the worst part of the cataracts of the formidable "Belly of Stone." Stores, provisions, munitions, and men to be pushed as far up and as quickly as possible, and several more of the useful

Yarrow boats sent up and put together all ready to take advantage of the first rise of the Nile. A corps of friendly Kabbabish Arabs to be enrolled, and to aid our troops in scouting and doing work in the desert during the great heat of summer. Meanwhile, it was hoped that the strong force at Suakim would have time to inflict a crushing blow upon Osman Digma before the hot weather came on, and that friendly relations might be established with the Hadendowas. A light line of railway, even if only pushed half-way across the desert, would, it was contended, render the transit of a strong force across the route to Berber perfectly feasible in the autumn. Once the Nile had fairly risen, about the latter end of August, the whole of the troops might advance on Berber, up Nile and from Suakim, combine there, and advance on Khartûm. The issue of the struggle could never be for a moment doubtful, but it would be sharp and fierce. It was rightly said that a soldier should have no politics; and this was especially the rule with the British army and soldier. He would fight, as he only can fight, and give his life without question or murmur for his queen and country; but what he did hope and ask for was that all his efforts and sacrifices might not be made for an empty idea, and the fruits of his hard-won victory abandoned at once and handed over to whomsoever chose to avail himself of it.

This was the line of representation that was probably the most popular, but it may be said here that the conditions which prevented—or which were accepted as preventing—the government from carrying out the plan of campaign were afterwards endorsed, not only by the public, but by the ministry which came into power. If those conditions had arisen from a series of mistakes, and especially the initial mistake of the despatch of Gordon to Khartûm, the results were eventually regarded as inevitable, and any attempt to do more for the honour or the interest of England, the protection of the khedive's authority, or the punishment of the rebels in the Soudan, was thought to be futile, or, at all events, unprofitable to any satisfactory end, even if large reinforcements could be sent to General Lord Wolseley to enable him to prosecute an autumn campaign.

What were the intentions of the Mahdi could not be discovered. He, like Osman Digma, took good care not to expose himself to danger, and there were repeated reports of disaffection among some of the chiefs, who had recently begun to find that he could not do quite as much as he had promised. In Kordofan especially there was opposition, for there a rival Mahdi had declared himself, one El Senoussi from Darfûr, who denounced Mohammed Achmed as a false prophet who did not obey the laws of the Koran. It was rumoured, too, that Khalifa Abdullah, the Mahdi's principal chief, had seceded with many of the Baggaras, that the spoil from Khartûm had been taken to Abbas Island, and that food was so scarce that the natives had been obliged to eat the pith of the palm-trees.

There was no such general falling asunder of the rebellion as to enable us to take advantage of it at that season of the year even if our forces had been adequate. Among the more significant events that happened about that time was the arrest of Zebehr Pasha. Whether Gordon was right in having suddenly turned to the opinion that Zebehr could be induced to render effectual aid in suppressing the revolt of the Mahdi and his followers is still a question for argument, but perhaps it was a more certain conclusion that whether Zebehr would have co-operated with Gordon at Khartûm or not, he became practically dangerous when he found that he was not to be employed. He might not have consented to go, but the refusal to permit him to do so was another slight which he was likely to take an opportunity to resent, and Lord Wolseley received information which induced him to advise that the ex-slave-hunting and slave-holding pasha should be arrested.

General Lennox, who was on a visit at Cairo, was suddenly sent back. The secret was well kept. The military police waited near Zebehr's house, at a *café* opposite, and at five o'clock in the afternoon of the 14th of March he was arrested as he was coming out. He appeared surprised, but offered no resistance, and was taken on board the *Iris*. His two sons, one adopted son, and one of his friends came down the same night from Cairo, also in charge of the police, and were taken on board the same steamer, which sailed next morning at eleven o'clock with sealed orders to Gibraltar.

This action was exclusively that of the English military authorities, and was taken on the recommendation of Lord Wolseley, with Sir Evelyn Baring's consent; and it was remarked at the time that it was at least singular that the English authorities, who refused to try Arabi, a prisoner of war, should arrest and deport Zebehr without formal inquiry.

Orders were given for the advance to be made from Suakim to Hasheen on the 20th of March, much to the delight of the camp. The men, who had been harassed by night attacks and alarms, were weary with daily toil and sick of remaining within the limited space which they occupied amidst a pestilent atmosphere and under extremely unhealthy conditions, but the prospect of an active engagement with the enemy revived them immediately. A reconnaissance of the village and the wells had been made on the previous day by a cavalry brigade, a battery brigade of the Royal Horse Artillery, and the Mounted Infantry supported by the Indian contingent.

As the cavalry advanced the enemy's scouts on the nearest hills fell back and joined the main body of the Arabs at Hasheen, where considerable numbers were seen to retreat up the valley, whence they disappeared among the mountains, leaving only small parties of men on camels, who

were acting as videttes. A few shots were fired from the top of a large hill called Dihilbat, and a small party of Hadendowas charged down on a patrol of the 20th Hussars, killing one of the men and wounding a sergeant. Lieutenant Birch of the mounted infantry, who had climbed a spur of the hill to get a better view, was attacked by five or six Arabs who were in hiding, and he only escaped after a sharp tussle in which he defended himself stoutly though he had a spear wound in the shoulder. The reconnoitring force reached the village without further opposition, but found only twenty or thirty rude huts made of grass and matting, which had been recently cleared out, nothing of any importance being discovered but three Remington rifles and a few cartridges. There were only two wells containing about seven feet of fairly good water, ten feet below the surface. Before noon the reconnaissance was completed, and the cavalry and mounted infantry, being covered by the horse artillery stationed on a low hill whence they could command the plain, retired in order. By half-past twelve all the men were in camp again. A letter addressed to Osman Digma was left stuck on a cleft stick near the village. It was a reply to a boastful letter sent by him to our camp a fortnight before, in which he referred to the power and success of the Mahdi, and the defeats of Hicks and Baker, and exhorted our generals to submit and to become Mohammedans. In answer to this he was reminded of the fact that he had been several times defeated and that events had proved the inability of the Mahdi's troops to withstand the British, and he in turn was exhorted to surrender. This letter was found next day trampled in the dirt, but whether he to whom it was addressed had ever read it there were no means of knowing.

Though the climate is exhausting and the conditions of the camp were in many respects revolting, daybreak when witnessed in the desert is a lovely spectacle, and especially in the open country, dotted with mimosa scrub and here and there a tree. At half-past five in the morning the whole force moved out with the exception of the 53d (the Shropshire Regiment), which remained behind to guard the camp.

Ring-doves, larks, and the small birds of the wilderness were singing their morning song and flitting hither and thither quite regardless of the moving body of armed men, who, as they went in glittering array across the bright and level plain, formed a brilliant spectacle.

The formation was an open square. The guards formed the right, marching in quarter column of companies. The second brigade formed the front in columns of fours. The native infantry were upon the left flank. The artillery, the mule-battery of six Gardner guns, the ambulance and transport were in the centre. The cavalry and mounted infantry were opened out in advance of the square, which reached the first ridge of hills at half-past eight o'clock, the enemy who occupied them retiring upon our

advance. The 70th Regiment (the East Surrey) set to work at once to construct four sand-bag redoubts, with seribas on the summits, on the left of the line of advance. It was about nine o'clock in the morning when the Berkshire Regiment reached the foot of Dihilbat Hill, which rose sheer above them like a wall, the enemy clustering on its rocky summit. Without firing a shot the men of this splendid regiment began to swarm up the side of the mountain in attack formation and preserving their line unbroken, while two battalions of marines followed a little in rear as supports. The foremost spur of the mountain was separated from the summit by a deep ravine about half-way up, and on reaching the edge of this the gallant Berkshires paused in their rapid ascent and opened fired so steadily that the roll of their musketry could be heard echoing from the surrounding hills. The enemy returned the fire for a time, but the marines advanced so as to enfilade their position, and the Arabs then wavered and ran, the Berkshire men crossing the ravine and gaining the summit. The Indian infantry deployed and advanced upon the village of Hasheen, the brigade of guards, formed in square, covering their rear; while the mounted infantry on the extreme right scoured the thick bush, whence small bodies of the enemy were keeping up a brisk fire upon the advancing Indian brigade.

The battery of artillery took up their position on a saddle-shaped hill, and cleared off the enemy on the right flank with shell and shrapnel; and while this was going on, a large body of the rebels, driven from the hills on the left by the advance of the marines and 49th, descended into the plain on the other side, and a detachment of the Bengal Lancers was despatched to intercept them. The rebels, instead of flying, stood their ground with extraordinary boldness, and charged the cavalry as they advanced. When the collision came they practised the same tactics as at El Teb, throwing themselves on the ground, and slashing at the horses' legs with their swords. After a severe hand-to-hand fight the lancers were obliged to fall back, losing four of their men, whose horses were hamstrung by the enemy, and whose bodies could not be recovered.

The Indian infantry had reached Hasheen, and were now formed in two sides of a square, their left resting on a ridge, and the brigade of guards in complete square covering their rear. On either flank the cavalry were skirmishing over the bush-covered plain, while groups of the enemy, in numbers from ten to a hundred strong, were swarming all round, on the slopes of the hills, in the thick undergrowth in the valley, and amongst the mimosa bushes scattered over the plain. One party of about a hundred and fifty strong suddenly debouched from behind a hill within three hundred yards of the guards, and actually charged down upon the brigade. They were received by such a withering volley from the face of the square that those who survived it at once turned and fled, leaving their wounded

chief, a mere youth, who had approached on a white hygeen (riding camel), which had fallen dead, within thirty yards of the square. The chief was at once made prisoner.

While this party were charging the square, the general, from his position on rising ground, saw a large body of the Arabs, some three thousand strong, lying down in the rear at the spot whence the advanced party had charged. They were rising to follow up the attack, but the terrible effect of the volleys of the guards on the advanced party checked their advance, and they abstained from the intended onslaught. On the extreme right rear of the main force another party tried to break through in the direction of the redoubts which the 70th were constructing, making way between them and the hillock upon which the general with his staff had taken up their position. The 5th Lancers, 20th Hussars, Mounted Infantry, and a troop of the Indian Lancers swooped down upon them and almost exterminated the band, most of them being shot down by the carbines of the cavalry, who swept over them as they lay on the ground endeavouring to repeat their former successful tactics. Only seven of the whole body made their escape.

This work was not performed without loss. Major Robertson of the Bengal Lancers, and Major Harvey of the 5th Lancers, were both severely wounded, while Sergeant-major Nicholls, who had only that morning been promoted to that rank, was killed. Four privates were killed and seven were wounded. General Ewart had a narrow escape, as his horse was killed under him. While this brilliant charge was being made, the artillery opened a heavy fire upon two large bodies of the enemy, of which one, some two thousand strong, was retreating in front, while the other, of double that strength, was on our left rear, having arrived on the scene of action from Tamai. At about one o'clock the second brigade and the Indian Infantry were ordered to fall back upon the guards, and at two o'clock the whole force began their march back towards the hill occupied by the 70th Regiment. The Indian brigade this time formed the advance. They were followed by the 46th and marines, while the guards, still in square, with the artillery, ambulance, and transport in their centre, brought up the rear. The position was by no means a pleasant one, for the enemy swarmed around, and the square, encumbered with its *impedimenta*, had to fight its way over ground covered with dense bush, the Arabs closing in on all sides, but chiefly in the rear and left flank. For half an hour the Scots Fusiliers and Coldstreams had to endure a very heavy fire from the almost invisible enemy, halting every two hundred yards to fire volleys into the scrub. The guards were, however, perfectly steady, moving on under the galling firing with admirable coolness, and in three quarters of an hour they emerged from the bushes into a comparatively open country. Captain Dallison, of the Scots Fusiliers, was killed, shot through the heart.

The loss was extraordinarily small, considering the fire to which the men had been exposed. The aim of the enemy was very bad, for a storm of bullets swept about the square, the great proportion flying overhead. At three o'clock the force reached the first ridge, where the 70th had now completed the redoubts and seribas. Here a halt was made for lunch, which was served out with great celerity to the troops, in half-companies.

The soldiers were much exhausted after marching and fighting for nine hours and a half under the blazing sun, and a long halt was given them before they started for camp. Leaving the 70th, with two guns and four Gardners, to hold the redoubts, the whole force now set off on their return march, reaching the camp again at about seven in the evening. It is not within our province to discuss either the tactics employed in the Suakim campaign, or the question whether by advancing to attack the Arab horde at successive stages on the route which it was proposed to open through the country and returning to camp after each engagement, any such decisive result was effected as would have been achieved if our forces could have followed the construction of the line of railway and held the positions from which Osman Digma's followers were driven. That a very strong opinion prevailed on the latter point is quite certain; but it had become evident that the desire to inflict a decisive defeat on the enemy and immediately to scatter the Arab forces was regarded as of more immediate importance than the construction of the railway, while it was considered dangerous to advance the force with all necessary supplies of water and rations to a point where it would not be in ready communication with the base at Suakim. The battle of Hasheen had cost the enemy dear, but it had cost us dear also. The loss of Captain Dallison and of Surgeon-major Lane, who was mortally wounded by a shot and died a day or two afterwards in the arms of the chaplain at Suakim, was felt deeply by all the officers; but it was reported next day that there were about twenty-two (officers and men) killed in the engagement and forty-three officers and men wounded. Neither the numbers of those who fell nor the intended plan of action were made known in the camp; indeed as regarded the latter it seemed as though the general was awaiting orders or suggestions from the government, and after events appeared to justify this conclusion. At anyrate there was no delay in making another advance, and the despatch issued by General Graham at a much later date (the 30th of May) gave the key to the operations which had by that time been concluded and the campaign brought to an end. That despatch said:

"The secretary of state for war directed me to organize a field force, and to make such transport arrangements as were possible so as to secure first the most pressing object of the campaign, viz. the destruction of the power of Osman Digma.

I was directed to arrange next for the military occupation of the Hadendowa territory, lying near the Suakim-Berber route, so as to enable the contractors to proceed with the railway which it was proposed to construct from Suakim to Berber. In the secretary of state's letter of the 27th February, 1885, my attention was again drawn to the necessity for rapidly constructing this railway. The direction of the works was to be entirely under my orders, their details and execution being in the hands of the contractors."

The destruction of the power of Osman Digma was the first consideration, and it was understood that General Graham was directed to attack all the positions occupied by the enemy and to disperse Osman Digma's troops. Lord Wolseley had at the end of February telegraphed to Lord Hartington: "It is important to crush Osman Digma and restore peace to the country now under his influence in order to push forward the railway, and, by a brilliant success near Suakim, to make the Soudanese realize what they must expect when we move forward in the autumn."

It may be taken for granted that the success of pressing operations by advancing against Osman Digma would depend on whether he would accept a battle which might be decisive, instead of retreating before our force and reoccupying the ground as far as possible when we retired after a fight which only temporarily dispersed his followers. Instead of coming to a decisive engagement, however, he appeared to adopt the plan of endeavouring to draw us further and further in pursuit until we reached the mountains, where he could engage us in harassing warfare, and make repeated attacks for the purpose of cutting off supplies and indefinitely prolonging hostilities throughout the hot season. At anyrate, the necessity for endeavouring to strike a decisive blow led to preparations for an advance in force, to the temporary abandonment of the construction of the railway, of which on the 6th of April, when work was recommenced, only two miles and a half of permanent way had been laid, that is to say, a month had necessarily elapsed before the work had extended beyond our own lines.

A seriba had been formed at Hasheen by the engineers and Madras Sappers, three small redoubts occupied the top of the long hill at one end of it, and a fourth a conical hill at the other end, where a heliograph station kept up communication with Suakim; but after the fight the enemy gradually occupied their former position on the Dihilbat Hill, where they were fired at by the guns in the redoubts whenever they showed themselves. The East Surrey Regiment, under Colonel Ralston, was left with five days' supplies to hold the seriba and the redoubts, from which, however, they were recalled on the 25th of March when the Arabs came back, and Osman Digma was reported to have made out that we were obliged to retire and leave him in possession, so that he claimed a

victory. At anyrate, the enemy were not much disheartened, as was shown by the furious attack they made upon the force which marched from Suakim to establish a position at Tofrek in what was known as Baker's scriba. This movement was made before the position at Hasheen was abandoned. It had been determined to march on Tamai without further delay, and as the distance from Suakim was too great for troops to make the journey and return to Suakim in one day, it was decided to establish two scribas on the line of advance, one four miles and the other eight miles from Suakim.

On Sunday the 22d of March the officers and men of the transport service were up at two o'clock A.M., and at daybreak were on the way with a convoy of 1500 baggage animals, consisting of 580 camels with 11,500 gallons of water, 500 camels with supplies, and about 400 pack-mules, draft-horses, and baggage-camels, with commissariat, water-tanks, ammunition, and ambulance; a vast unwieldy column, with a large number of native drivers.

This convoy filled the hollow square formed by the Indian contingent, which was preceded by a squadron of lancers and columns of infantry. By six o'clock A.M. the advance towards Tamai was made, the lancers scouting in front, then thirty of the naval brigade with four Gardner guns, a detachment of royal engineers with field telegraph, the telegraph wagon uncoiling its wire as they went, a battalion each of the Berkshire and the royal marine light infantry. This was the first square, with spare ammunition and water-carts in the centre. The second square, following on the right rear, consisted of a company of Madras Sappers, the 15th Sikhs, 28th Bombay Native Infantry, 17th Bengal Native Infantry and all the transport, the 20th Hussars patrolling in the rear to keep open the line of communication to Suakim. This force was under the command of Sir John M'Neill, with General Hudson in charge of the Indian contingent.

It was terrible work to get the vast convoy of animals along in the midst of intervening thorn bushes, and the progress was very slow, while the tremendous heat and the thick cloud of dust that rose in the midst of the square added to the difficulty of the dense scrub, and the camels became almost unmanageable. It soon became obvious that the original plan could not be carried out, as if the force advanced eight miles there would not be daylight to form the scriba and for the Indian brigade to return. Sir John M'Neill therefore determined to halt at six miles and there to form one scriba. At half-past ten o'clock the force emerged on a fairly open space of sandy and gravelly ground, apparently about 300 to 400 yards across, dotted with thorn bushes and surrounded by thick bush and scrub, from which, as well as from the thorn bushes, material was cut to form a scriba, consisting, as usual, of a hedge of about four feet high with a two-foot ditch behind. It was a triple scriba—three inclosures of

diamond shape standing corner to corner, the farthest corner in the direction of Tamai and the nearest in that of Suakim. At each of these two corners were to be a sand-bag redoubt, ditch, and parapet for two Gardner guns; that nearest Suakim was for the royal marines and half the naval brigade, the centre space of the next division for the camels, the third nearer Tamai for the Berkshire, two Gardner guns, and the other half of the naval brigade.

It cannot be said that there was no idea of the probability of an attack in force being made by the enemy, because there had been a rumour of some such intention; but there had been many other rumours, and as on the advance no considerable bodies of Arabs had been seen (though it was afterwards reported that the look-out from the ships and the station at Suakim had noted considerable numbers of the enemy in the desert), no immediate expectation of an assault was entertained. It was also said, however, that a spy had actually reported that Osman would hazard another battle, and that on the morning of the 22d it was reported to the interpreter of the intelligence department that an attack by 5000 Arabs was about to take place. Whether this was so or not there was subsequently an impression that warning of the concentration of Osman's troops on the flank of the advancing force might have been given. As it was, though the force was accompanied by two mounted "friendlies," who acted as scouts, no news was brought of the gathering or lurking foe. The seribas were not quite finished, but the working portion of the men had nearly completed them—those who were resting lay beside their piled arms smoking pipes or drinking coffee by the camp fires. The camels and baggage animals, which had been unladen in the central seriba, had been taken out and formed in the open ground in a column facing Suakim. Perhaps two-thirds of the force were under arms or resting on their arms, but no attack was anticipated; the men were tired, and all was going easily when a sudden cry, a shriek, a yell was heard in the rear of the mass of camels and baggage animals, and a black swarm of Arabs was seen, their gleaming swords and spears hacking and stabbing, amidst frantic cries which were soon answered by the shouts of our men, who, though taken unaware, showed admirable promptitude and decision. The vast mass of animals, startled by the onslaught, stampeded and went at a mad rush towards Suakim, carrying with them the host of drivers and a few of the regulars, who could not disentangle themselves from the midst of the beasts and were obliged to go with them; some of the officers and men, however, disengaged themselves and returned. The videttes rode in hastily to report the advance of the enemy, who were, however, already leaping into the clearing before more could be done by the general and his officers than to shout to the men to stand to arms. Amidst the stampeding transport animals, the Arabs were leaping about, slashing the

poor brutes or hamstringing them, and cutting down drivers or fugitives as they went. Mounted officers leaped their horses into the scribas, but the men were already there, and those who were at work, having snatched their arms from the pile, were soon firing at the advancing Arabs. Some of the enemy had sprung into the scriba where the marines were placed, but so quick were the men that, though they had to take their arms from the pile, not a single Arab remained standing, and not one could afterwards approach near to the hedge. The Berkshire men, who were at work, were equally prompt, snatched their arms, stood in a small square, and kept off the yelling foe by a steady fire, after which they were able to help their comrades to keep the southernmost scriba.

The working parties had scarcely time to fall back inside the scribas, and many gathered in groups outside to withstand the torrent of the assailants. Others faced them across the large gaps which still remained in the works, especially in the large scriba defended by the Indian infantry, who were practically obliged to stand their ground without defence. The redoubt in the apex of the southern work, where two Gardners were placed, was still unfinished, but the Gardners were worked until, after a few rounds, they got jammed, and the Arabs poured in, killing Lieutenant Seymour of the *Dolphin*, in charge of the guns, and six of the blue-jackets, and wounding fourteen others. A hundred and ten of the Arabs then pressed into the scriba, but not one survived to tell the tale of their hand-to-hand fight with the 49th; their bodies were counted as they lay at the end of the fight. The 49th fought with splendid courage and coolness, their steady fire not only sweeping away those who had entered the scriba, but repulsing all further attempts of the Arabs to enter the inclosure. The Indian infantry in the large scriba fought at a great disadvantage. Not only were the lines of fencing unfinished, but the baggage animals were at first between them and the enemy, and so hindered the fire of the defenders, and as the Arabs charged down many of the panic-stricken camels, horses, and mules rushed through the gaps into the scriba, creating the utmost confusion, and carrying the soldiers before them. Nevertheless, the Sikhs of the 28th Native Infantry stood their ground manfully, mowing down the enemy with their volleys, and when most severely pressed boldly charging them with the bayonet. The 17th Native Regiment, however, wavered, and, partly carried away by the stampede of the transport animals, fell back, firing wildly. Many of them rushed headlong for shelter into the northern scriba, almost driving in our marines. The marines, however, defended their lines as steadily as if these had been the bulwarks of a ship, but although never once broken or driven back a foot they did not come out of the fray scatheless, as six were killed and nineteen wounded.

The first wild rush of the enemy checked, the position was safe, and now rapid volleys were poured from the faces of each of the scribas into

the crowded enemy, whilst a rain of bullets from the two Gardner guns at the redoubt, commanded by Lieutenant Paget, at the apex of the northern seriba, mowed wide gaps in the masses of the Arabs as these charged along the front.

The fire was too terrible to be withstood, and the natives fell back to the bushes, where their chiefs strove to re-form them for a second onslaught. Few, however, responded to the call, and soon all who were able to retreat disappeared among the bushes. The whole affair lasted but twenty minutes. There were a few minutes of confused but desperate fighting, of hand-to-hand struggle and imminent danger, five minutes of a terrible sweeping fire into the masses of the enemy, and a few minutes longer completed their dispersal after they began to recoil from the front. For a time nothing could be seen, so dense were the clouds of smoke and sand-dust that covered the scene of conflict. Then, when the air cleared, it could be seen how great was the destruction which had been wrought. The whole space which had been cleared of bush for the construction of the seribas was thickly strewn with dark bodies, varied here and there by those of soldiers overtaken before they gained the inclosure, and by the transport animals which had fallen under the cross-fire to which they were exposed. Over a thousand of the Arabs lay dead around our seribas. Their fanatic courage and the manner in which they flung themselves into the face of death called forth the admiration of our troops; but the same fanaticism caused them neither to give nor to accept quarter; they would feign death that they might spring up and stab a man or hamstring a horse, and it was dangerous to go out to examine their slain lest a seeming corpse should start up and spear the nearest of our men. Several boys of from ten to twelve years of age and some women were found among the corpses. Taking the number who must have fallen in the bush, or have crawled there to die, there can be no doubt that the loss of the enemy exceeded fifteen hundred, including many of their most valiant chiefs. Our victory, however, was by no means cheaply won. Our total loss in the three seribas was, of British, seven officers and sixty-three men killed, and six officers and eighty-nine men wounded, while the casualties of the Indian infantry amounted to about eighty. This did not constitute the entire loss of the force, for a great many followers were killed in the stampede outside the seriba and in the flight to Suakim.

Among our officers killed were Captain Van Beverholt of the 17th Native Regiment, Lieutenant Swinton of the Berkshire, Lieutenant Seymour; and of the engineers, Lieutenant Newman and Captain Romilly, the latter one of the Romilly's of the old Huguenot family which has been so distinguished in English history.

The hussars, who were patrolling between the seriba and Suakim, were met on their return march to the latter place by some of the 9th Bengal

Cavalry, and hearing the firing behind them turned and hastened back, so that they met a number of the baggage animals, drivers, camp-followers, and a few English soldiers and native infantry in flight towards Suakim, pursued by Arabs who were cutting them down without resistance. Half the cavalry, therefore, dismounted, and fired volleys to check the Arabs' pursuit, then mounted and drove them before them, and being afterwards joined by a squadron of the 5th Lancers, were able to prevent the attempt of the enemy to creep round by the sea-coast and turn their flank, and to push the Arabs back towards the seriba, where, being enfiladed by the fire of our men, they dispersed towards the sea.

There were a great many wounded on our side, and the work of the doctors was very arduous. They saw to their patients under shelter of the telegraph wagon, while the intelligence was being wired to headquarters and the special correspondents and artists were scribbling and sketching as the horrible turmoil raged around. A message was sent back from Suakim, that the guards were coming out to aid the force at the seriba, and General M'Neill telegraphed that the enemy had been repulsed. At 11.30 A.M. on the 22d General Graham himself arrived with the guards with fresh stores and water. At 2 P.M. the Indians and grenadier guards moved off on their return, forming a large square inclosing the camels and the dhoolies with the wounded.

This battle may be said to have been the last important engagement which was fought by our troops in the Suakim expedition. It virtually closed the campaign, for it was discovered that it had, for the time, completely discomfited Osman Digma, and scattered, if it had not altogether shattered his forces. As Sir Michael Hicks Beach afterwards said when proposing the vote of thanks to the army: "It is not too much to say that the power of Osman Digma had been absolutely crushed."

The seriba having been left in the occupation of such a considerable force it was determined to push on preparations for the further advance on Tamai, and convoys were sent from Suakim with large supplies of water and provisions, that the forces might be well able to proceed from Tofrek, the place where the seriba was established. The enemy, notwithstanding the crushing defeat which they had experienced, continued to carry on desultory hostilities, and the convoys had some sharp tussles with parties of Arabs, who swarmed in the thick bushes and scrub. The captive war-balloon, made of gold-beater's skin, was now of service for surveying the surrounding country. It was filled at the water fort from tubes of compressed gas, which had been brought from Chatham. It weighed only 90 lbs., and contained 7000 cubic feet of gas. Its diameter was 23 feet, the basket being large enough to hold one man conveniently. When inflated it was attached by a fine wire-rope to a wagon, and communication was maintained by means of notes attached to a string. The work of conveying

the water and stores to the scriba was arduous and exhausting, but it was done; and the condition of the men was the more precarious, because the tainted atmosphere at the scriba was now even worse than that at Suakim in consequence of the number of dead and the masses of slaughtered beasts, the camels having to be cut open in order that the carcasses might be more readily dried by the intense heat.

The advance to Tamai was ordered for the 1st of April, and on Sunday the 29th of March (it is remarkable how many battles have been fought and how many events in warfare have occurred on a Sunday), the whole camp at Suakim was in a state of excitement because of the landing of the Australian contingent. They were received with the utmost enthusiasm, and no wonder, for it would have been difficult to find a finer set of men. Their robust physique, their evident fitness, and their mature strength elicited the admiration of the officers who received them, and of the men, who gave them a hearty welcome as trusted comrades.

It was an historical event, and as the men landed at Quarantine Island they cordially responded to the cheers of the sailors on the vessels in the harbour.

The troops consisted of 28 officers, 500 privates, 33 men of the ambulance corps, and 30 of the artillery, Colonel Richardson commanding the whole. All the infantry wore scarlet tunics and white helmets, with black valises, and carried converted rifles of Henry's patent. The artillerymen had repeating carbines. The contingent drew up in line two deep on the shore of the island, and was eagerly scanned by the crowd which occupied all the points of vantage on the piles of commissariat stores. Headed by the fife-and-drum bands of the East Surrey Regiment and the King's (Shropshire Light Infantry), the Australians then marched over the causeway to the camp; the whole route being lined with an extraordinary heterogeneous gathering, which was in itself a remarkable sight—Indians of the native contingent, privates of English regiments, Arabs of the town, camel-drivers, sailors, camp-followers, and Greeks—all gathered together to witness the arrival of the new-comers. And with almost the same enthusiasm the English soldiers in camp greeted the familiar scarlet. Scarlet was, however, a rare colour in Suakim. The officers rode out to see the column, the passing camel convoys were halted, and the pickets and guards turned out.

General Graham met the Australians *en route* and introduced himself. On arriving at the outskirts of the camp the men formed line and gave a general salute. Sir G. Graham then rode down the line, front and rear, of the contingent, which afterwards formed three sides of a square, while the general addressed them, saying:—

"Men of New South Wales,—In the name of the forces under my command I give you a hearty welcome as comrades and brothers in

THE AUSTRALIAN CONTINGENT AT SUAKIM.

MEETING OF COLONEL RICHARDSON AND LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR G. GRAHAM, MARCH, 1885.

arms who have come hither to share in the perils and toils, and we hope also the glories of this campaign. Those who are engaged in the present expedition are proud to bear with you the name of Englishmen, for you belong as much as we do to that glorious nation on which it has been said the sun never sets, and we hope that our freedom will shine for ever, as the sun upon our people. The heart of every Englishman beats high at the magnanimous spirit of our colonies—that spirit which knits us together as members of one great empire to maintain our honour. We honour the feeling which led you to leave your pleasant homes, your wives, your children, and your friends, to share the perils of this dreary war against the desert and its savages. We know you will cheerfully submit to those privations, as all your comrades here have had to do. You must know that severe discipline is absolutely necessary to the safety of an army in the field, and you will submit to that discipline as much in the work you will have to do as in actual fighting. The eyes of all English-speaking races, and indeed the eyes of the whole civilized world, are upon you, and I am certain that you will uphold the honour of the empire. I feel proud to command such a force, and am sure it will do the greatest credit to New South Wales and to the race of which you are an important part."

Reconnaissances having been made the force advanced, as ordered, on the 1st of April with the necessarily large transport service, leaving only about 3000 men of various battalions to protect Suakim with four screw mountain-guns and the Australian artillery, all the remainder of the field force being either on the march or at the zeriba. The total strength of the advancing fighting force was 8175 officers and men and 1361 horses. On the 2d, after a difficult journey through the bush, a large zeriba was formed in the centre of the group of the Tselah Hills, whence the scattered villages of New Tamai could be seen hardly two miles distant. The whole force with followers amounted to 10,000 men, provisions and water for whom had to be conveyed by the transports. It was soon evident, however, that Osman Digma did not mean to risk another battle, and though desultory firing from parties of Arabs in the ravines and gullies was continued at intervals, and some of our men were hit, two of the Australians being wounded, it was soon evident that the enemy were unable to oppose any serious resistance to the advance of the force, which was continued through the recently-deserted villages. The movements of our troops were so directed as to endeavour to draw the Arabs from their positions, but they were evidently not able to venture a regular engagement, and, as they continued to retire, and it would have been fruitless to follow Osman Digma into the mountains without supplies of water for the transport, the withdrawal of the force by alternate brigades was ordered. New Tamai was destroyed along with considerable quantities

of the enemy's ammunition which were found there, and the huts, including Osman Digma's residence, were burned.

On the 4th of April the force had again reached Suakim, and it was then that attention was turned to the continuation of the railway, the work of which had been stopped on the 22d of March for the purpose of advancing against Osman Digma. An advanced seriba was to be established five miles on the road to Handoub to cover the head of the railway, which was to be pushed on as fast as possible, and a block-house and another seriba was to be formed at Handoub itself five miles further on, while covering parties were to protect the head of the line as it advanced.

Of course this all meant more convoys with transport of provisions and water. By the 7th of April General Fremantle, with the Coldstreams, Australians, some engineers, and screw-guns, established the first post, and then and afterwards the Australians and the Scots Guards showed remarkable powers of endurance on the hot and exhausting march. The country was open, the Scots Guards were left at the first seriba, the Australians and Coldstreams advanced to Handoub, where the seriba was constructed near an old well, some other wells being scraped or dug in the Khor. The country presented a broad expanse of sand and shingle about ten miles in circumference, encircled by barren hills, and containing some light bushes and scrub with here and there piles of boulders. General Graham visited the station, and the transport camels retired to Suakim under escort.

A proclamation was issued to the enemy calling on them to submit, but without any obvious result. Osman's force seemed to be broken, and a number of his chief officers had been killed. The weaker tribes were shifty and uncertain. Hasheen was deserted. A week of hard work ensued, when the following telegram was received by Lord Wolseley on the 15th. "Proposed Suakim policy. Construction of railway to any considerable distance to be postponed, pending further consideration. Suakim to be held for present; and any position in neighbourhood necessary for protection from constant attack. Report on point to which railway should proceed, and instruct Graham . . . not to enter into engagements with tribes inconsistent with this policy." This was a reply to a former question of General Graham, whether he might give assurance to wavering sheikhs of protection against Osman Digma, and whether he could state that the English would not go away as they had done on the previous year. Evidently the campaign in the Soudan was approaching the end.

On the 13th a reconnaissance had been made from Handoub to Otao, eight miles further, where two wells were found with a fair supply of water; and on the 16th the Scots Guards, with two guns, a squadron

of cavalry, and a company of engineers, went and formed a camp or rather an advanced post there. On the 18th a reconnaissance was made to Deberet, and a column from Handoub, composed of Australians, guns, and mounted infantry, co-operated by advancing on Deberet through the Waratab Hills, while a third column from Otao operated towards the same point. A few parties of the enemy were seen retiring, but no resistance was attempted.

On the 19th the Scots Guards, with two guns and a company of engineers, were sent to Tambouk, six miles beyond Otao, to occupy the wells; but nothing was seen of the enemy, though the seriba at Tambouk was fired into on the 23d without any injury being done. Some of the friendlies arrived there with the camel corps, and encamped outside the seriba. On the night of the 26th firing was resumed by the enemy both at Tambouk and Otao, and the telegraph was cut. On the 28th they had scraped some holes under the sleepers of the railway and set fire to them, and an ambuscade was consequently set to watch the line, and an armoured train was ordered to patrol it after dark. General Graham had sent a message to Lord Wolseley urging the desirability of still further crushing the power of Osman Digma before withdrawing, as the force could operate on Sinkat and Tamanieb from Tambouk and Suakim; but there was a report that Lord Wolseley would soon be on his way to Suakim, and it was understood that the campaign, if not the further occupation of the Soudan, would soon be over. Eighteen miles and three quarters of the projected railway had been laid from Suakim to Otao, at a cost of over £850,000. Osman Digma had been at all events temporarily crippled, and the tribes were falling away from him; the adherents of the Mahdi at Kordofan were diminishing in number by internal dissensions, and, as we have seen, there were reasons which induced the government to regard these as sufficient grounds for proclaiming a return to the original policy of non-intervention in the provinces which they had at first advised the khedive to abandon.

The deficit on the financial statement for the year arising from unexpected demands for Egypt was £3,732,000, and Mr. Gladstone, in committee of supply, after stating the reasons for asking for a vote of credit of eleven millions, had intimated that further operations in the Soudan would cease, and that the strength of the empire would be made available in other quarters should it become necessary. The railway had been carried forward, but the heat of the climate was almost unbearable, and there was great danger of an army dwindling away by sickness, increased by the fatigue of a harassing campaign.

On the 2d of May Lord Wolseley arrived at Suakim. Some fighting continued with moving bodies of the enemy, and two columns, with about 400 friendlies, marched to Shakool, ten miles south of Otao, to attack a

body of Arabs who were under a lieutenant of Osman Digma, and who, with their leader, fled on our approach, and were driven over the hills, leaving the valley in our hands without any stubborn resistance. About 100 of the enemy who fired upon our men from the hills were killed, and nearly 2000 sheep and goats, besides camels and donkeys, were taken; the friendlies having rendered good service by acting with the mounted infantry from Otao. This body of Arabs who had been defeated were they who had fired on Otao and Tambouk, had burned the sleepers of the railway, and had kept Osman Digma supplied with provisions while they menaced our outposts with the only organized force in the district.

Till the 16th of May Lord Wolseley was busily inspecting the line and all the post arrangements. The men were permitted to have a little rest, though it was reported that another expedition in force against Osman was to be made and there were preparations for transport. On the 8th the commander-in-chief held a review of all the troops at Suakim. The martial spectacle of the march past and the glittering arms and accoutrements under the early morning sun was a splendid spectacle from a military point of view: the guards, the Sikhs, and the Australians being particularly noticeable for their admirable order and steadiness. On the same evening it was known that there would be no further expedition. The medical officers had strongly deprecated the continued marches in such a climate at that season, and there was reason to fear that if the exertion were prolonged the mortality would be appalling, for sickness was already spreading rapidly, fever of a typhoid character was increasing, the hospitals were filling, and a heavy rain which fell on the night of the 9th had brought out the foul odours from the sand and showed what a pestilential area the camp had become.

Yes, the campaign was at an end. Officers on the sick-list or among the wounded were being conveyed to the vessels that are to take them home to recover or to die. General Graham and his staff embarked in the *Deccan* on the 17th, after having bidden farewell to his troops. The *Jumna*, with the guards, left on the same day. Lord Wolseley followed in the *Queen* two days afterwards. He had issued an address to the troops, in which he said, "the deeds of the force in the Soudan have added one more chapter to the glorious record of our national prowess."

The Australians, after seven weeks of good service, were ordered home. They had taken their part in the skirmishing, the marching, the holding of the seribas, the advance against the enemy, the privations in that burning climate. After reviewing them in company with General Graham, General Greaves, Lord Charles Beresford, and the staff, Lord Wolseley had addressed them, speaking highly of their soldierly appearance and of the fitness of the artillery which had just arrived at camp after a long march; he also said:—

"Although I was conducting operations in a distant part of the Soudan, I felt great pride in the thought that I had under my command a contingent of colonial troops, and my pride was the greater that they represented such a vast portion of the British Empire as Australia. I also feel that Australia, putting such a fine body of troops in the field, is a warning to any quarrelsome nation that they will have to fight not only Great Britain and Ireland, but also England's most distant colonies." Two days afterward, on May 17th, the contingent re-embarked on board the troopship *Arab*, on which, at the imperial expense, they were conveyed back to Sydney.

Lord Wolseley's farewell despatch, which reached the troops before their departure, contained the following passage:—"I thank the gallant soldiers of the New South Wales contingent, not only for the services they have rendered, but for the sympathy which prompted them to come so far to take part in a war undertaken by the empire to which we all belong. They will carry home with them the thanks of our sovereign and the best wishes of those with whom they fought side by side. They have borne themselves well in action and camp, and I trust that should any serious war be forced on our empire in the future we may again find ourselves shoulder to shoulder with Australian troops facing a common enemy. The deeds of the forces in the Soudan have added one more chapter to the glorious records of national prowess, and all of you who have belonged to it—soldiers or sailors, British, Indian, or Australian—may feel with pride the high reputation the army and navy has gained has not suffered at your hands."

A farewell message from her Majesty the Queen was also received, as follows:—"The queen commands to be conveyed to the officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of the New South Wales contingent her thanks for their services during the recent campaign, and expresses her great satisfaction that her colonial forces have served side by side with British troops in the field. Her Majesty wishes them a prosperous voyage home."

When the Australian contingent re-entered Sydney on the 19th of June they had lost six of their number by death. The reception accorded to them by their fellow-countrymen and the people of Sydney was most enthusiastic, and their arrival was celebrated by a ceremonial reception by the governor, the ministry, and representatives of the sister colonies. After this there were congratulatory meetings, and, to crown the whole, a banquet in honour of the contingent by the citizens of Sydney.

There is no need to follow the successive withdrawals of troops as different regiments or battalions were recalled during the months that ensued. Returning to the policy of assisting the Egyptian government to

protect the boundaries of Egypt proper at Wady Halfa and the Red Sea littoral, where Colonel Chermside, the governor-general, had a number of Egyptian troops, our forces were being gradually but rapidly withdrawn from the Nile and the desert stations; and the war in Egypt and the Soudan was, so far as we were concerned, virtually at an end, though our few remaining troops had still to take part in occasional hostilities.

It was evident that government no longer contemplated either a continued occupation of any portion of the Soudan provinces or the retention of any large bodies of troops in Egypt itself. The financial condition of the Egyptian government was not such as to warrant the maintenance of a foreign force, and though, on the 24th of March, the chancellor of the exchequer moved for leave to bring in a bill to sanction the participation of the English government in an international Egyptian loan of £9,000,000, and the bill was passed through the Lords' committee a month afterwards, the tenure of the Liberal ministry was drawing to a close. In the month of June Lord Salisbury's government succeeded to office, and the then impending general election took place in August, the Conservatives returning to power in the new parliament.

When once the policy of evacuating the Soudan and Dongola and gradually withdrawing troops from Egypt had been declared there was a considerable movement of our forces. The Black Watch went to Wady Halfa, and other changes were made which left Sir F. Stephenson, who was in command in Egypt, a much-diminished army with which to operate at various points.

At Suakim some efforts were made to induce the friendly and neutral tribes to give allegiance to the British, and, of course, it was determined to hold Suakim though the landing of railway plant and material was suspended. Lord Wolseley had as early as the 16th of April sent a long despatch to Lord Hartington remonstrating against evacuating the Soudan and abandoning the intention of proceeding actively against the Mahdi or rather Mahdiism, and especially of retiring from the province of Dongola, the possession of which he (Lord Wolseley) declared meant supremacy and power. He concluded that as it was the intention of the government to maintain British garrisons in Egypt till such time as the country was strong enough to stand by itself, we were bound to prevent its falling a prey to the Mahdi or any other invader; and he argued that this could only be effectually achieved by advancing, as originally intended, and destroying his power in the neighbourhood of Khartûm. He declared it to be his opinion that the struggle with Mahdiism must come sooner or later, and that, if we allowed all that had been done to go for nothing, and tried to stave off the final struggle for a few years, those years would be years of struggle and disturbance for Egypt, of burden and strain to our military resources, with the result that the contest that must come in the

end would be no less than those that confronted us at the time that he wrote.

But the policy of withdrawal had been decided upon, and was continued when Lord Salisbury's government came into power, Sir Henry Drummond Woolf being appointed to proceed on a special mission to Egypt, Sir E. Baring and other high officials at Cairo returning to London. The results of Sir H. D. Woolf's mission and of his communications with the government of the sultan at Constantinople have yet to be made known; and the government of Lord Salisbury, considering the condition of the country, and especially of Dongola, where there were no supplies and to hold which would have necessitated a fresh expedition, were not prepared to check the evacuation of the provinces, though desultory hostilities continued to be carried on at intervals in the territory beyond Suakim.

At the end of July reports that the Mahdi had died from smallpox on the 29th of June were confirmed. He was taken ill on the 5th and died on the 8th day of Ramadan, but it was believed from the description of the disorder that his death was the result of spotted typhus caused by the pestiferous atmosphere of Khartûm, where the dead were allowed to remain unburied after the fall of the town.

He had appointed four khalifs, Abdullah, Osman Digma, a Soudanese sheikh, and the Sheikh El Senoussi, who declined the honour. The followers of Abdullah proclaimed him the successor to the Mahdiship. He was an able and unscrupulous leader, but being only the sheikh of an insignificant tribe the chiefs of the great tribes refused to follow him as ruler, and fresh complications ensued.

Late in August the report of Lord Wolseley on the Soudan campaign was published, and a large number of decorations, promotions, and rewards to officers and men specially mentioned were granted.

General Sir F. Stephenson and General Grenfell were actively employed on the frontier of Egyptian territory, but at Sennâr and elsewhere the opposition of the sheikhs to Abdullah and Mahdiism had succeeded in diminishing the power of the rebel leaders. Interest became chiefly directed to Suakim, where Colonel Chermside was in communication with Ras Aloula, who with a large Abyssinian force marched to the relief of Kassala, and meeting Osman Digma's army at Sufeit, where the Arabs were strongly fortified, fought a great battle, in which 3000 of the Arabs and Osman Digma himself were reported to have been slain.

In the early days of December, however, reports from Wady Halfa again directed notice to the forces occupying posts on the Nile. On the right or east bank of the Nile, about ninety miles south of Wady Halfa, is a place called Ginnis. The intervening territory is barren and desolate, and only a few poor and wretched Arabs were to be found there; but the Nile Valley Railway, which at the close of the Khartûm campaign had

been extended only to Akasheh, thirty miles south of Sarras, had been afterwards carried to Firket, south of the Dal Cataracts. Five miles south of Firket is Mograkeh, and two miles north of that, Kosheh, which was our furthest outpost. A body of the rebel Arabs coming to meet our troops had crossed the river and had strips of fertile land at their backs from which to draw supplies, while provisions for our force had to be taken by rail from Wady Halfa, whence they had come from Cairo. The enemy had been harassing our forts with artillery and rifle fire under cover of the rocky hills and sand-banks, and had concentrated at Ginnis. General Grenfell as division commander, and Generals Butler and Huyshe (the latter the officer who commanded the Berkshires at General M'Neill's scriba) each leading a brigade, determined on an advance. The Cameron Highlanders and two Egyptian battalions were engaged, the latter being chiefly black troops. Three columns approached by different routes, and after shelling the huts in front of Kosheh, the stern-wheel steamer turning her batteries on the rebels in the huts at Ginnis, a rush was made from the hills by the Highlanders, a few other British troops, and the black battalion, who cleared out the rebels near to Kosheh, while Butler's brigade swept on and attacked the enemy at Ginnis, where the second brigade joined them, and the place was carried after a stubborn fight, the routed Arabs retreating to the south, leaving their camp, much ammunition, and twenty standards. It was believed that nearly seven thousand Arabs had concentrated there, and a large number were killed in the engagement.

With this battle ended the year 1885, and early in 1886 arrangements were in progress to advance on the Nile line and occupy the posts with Egyptian troops. Meantime the rebels at Suakim found themselves opposed by the friendlies of the tribes who had given in their allegiance to Colonel Chermside. The friendlies of the Amarar tribe continued to fight Osman Digma's followers successfully, and in June it was reported that they had occupied Handoub, and that Osman Digma, who took too good care of himself to be killed, was at Tamai, where it was expected a fight would shortly take place.

During the succeeding months till October various and contradictory rumours were heard, but there seemed to be little doubt that in the southern provinces the Arabs chiefs and their followers were fighting amongst themselves, and there were not wanting some evidences that the rebellion would end in desultory hostilities among the tribes, amidst which some overtures for a restoration of a regular government might be obtained.

The tangled question of Egyptian finance and of impending bankruptcy were mooted over and over again, but the financial schemes which were discussed, and those portions of them which were eventually adopted—and are perhaps destined soon to be superseded by the result of the mission

CAPTURE OF TAMAI BY "FRIENDLIES"—

EARLY MORNING. OCTOBER 7, 1886.

of Sir H. D. Woolf—do not come into these last pages of the present narrative.

The latest event which can now engage our attention may be said to conclude this story of the war in Egypt and the Soudan. On the morning of the 7th of October the "friendlies" in the district of Suakim did what had been expected of them, and captured Tamai in a desperate fight, in which two hundred of the rebel followers of Osman Digma were slain, numbers were wounded, and forty were taken prisoners.

The force of the friendlies was a small one, but they fought valorously under their leader, Ahmed. Twenty of them were killed and twenty wounded; but all the principal men of the rebels were slain, and a large amount of booty fell to the victors. Colonel Kitchener gave orders to grant quarter to everyone, and sent out a transport detachment to bring in the enemy's guns, the friendlies still pursuing the enemy. The road to Tokar was open, and the event was considered to be likely to effect the pacification of the Eastern Soudan. At that time the enemy at Dongola was said not to exceed two thousand.

As regards the British troops then in Egypt, it may be mentioned that on the 6th of July the forces were said to be as follows:—At Alexandria a battery of artillery, the 1st battalions of the Dorsetshire and Essex Regiments, and half of the 1st battalion of the King's (Shropshire Light Infantry). At Cairo three batteries of artillery, a company of engineers, the 1st battalions of the Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment) and the Cheshire Regiment, the 2d battalion of the Dorsetshire Regiment, the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, and half of the first battalion of the King's (Shropshire Light Infantry). At Assouan the 20th Hussars, two batteries of artillery, a company of Engineers, the 1st battalion of the Princess of Wales' Own (Yorkshire Regiment), and the 2d battalion of the Durham Light Infantry.

Little remains to be said. During the course of this story of a remarkable episode in English history we have made such comments as it may be hoped have served to elucidate the scope and effects of the events that have been described, and it is not within the province of the narrator (even if it would be acceptable to the reader) to say more than a few words on the probable results of the war in Egypt and the Soudan. We have not yet seen the end, or even the near consequences; but whatever may be our opinion on the subject of the occupation of Egypt, and of the expeditions which were sent to the Nile, across the desert, and to the shores of the Red Sea, one thing is certain, Egypt has been compared to a stagnant pool into which a stone being thrown, a few circling eddies rise and spread and are lost, and all remains as still and lifeless as before. But the stone that was cast into Egypt in the time of Mehemet Ali, stirred it into more than

a mere dull, dying ripple; and it may surely be said that the stone cast into Cairo after the suppression of Arabi's rebellion has awakened the slumbering life of the corrupt pool. Even those who may denounce the intervention and depreciate its probable effects, cannot altogether deny the awakening that followed the vigorous organization of a better government; the prosecution of sanitary laws previously unknown or neglected; the earnest determined efforts to ameliorate the condition of those in sickness and in prison; the stern demand for the establishment of juster tribunals and the exercise of power, with a real desire, at all events, to reform the government which had to be sustained.

It is not at all likely that the last chapter of British intervention in Egypt has been written. It is, perhaps, not improbable that the story of British interposition in the Soudan may have to be resumed; it is even possible that such interposition may be manifested not from the side of the Nile on the desert route, but from the side of Abyssinia and the Equatorial Provinces. Who can tell?

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